**BARCELONA: WHO FOLLOWS LUIS ENRIQUE?**

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# Contents

## FEATURES

34 Player biography
Arturo Vidal

40 Club focus
Monaco

48 Special feature
Chinese Super League

## THE WORLD THIS MONTH

People in the news...on and off the pitch

4 In pictures
10 From the Editor
14 **Keir Radnedge** FIFA must take control
16 **Jim Holden** Football's cruel sackings
18 On the radar
21 ESM XI
22 Obituaries
25 **Ins & outs** People on the move
28 **Brian Glanville** What now for Wenger?

## EYEWITNESS

30 Turks & Caicos Islands

## 6 OF THE BEST

56 Goal creators

## TALENT SCOUT

58 South American under-20s

## FACE TO FACE

60 Renato Sanches

## WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

62 New season in the USA

## PICTURE ESSAY

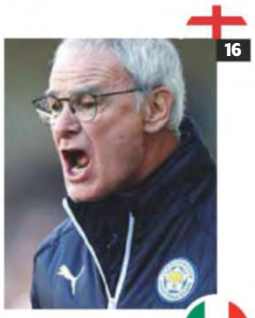
64 Derby day in Aleppo

## ARCHIVES

68 April 1983

## THE GREAT MATCHES

90 Romania v Argentina, 1994



16

56

60

64

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See page 8

## World Service

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

78
72 **Sweden** New season preview
75 **Italy** Roma building for the future
76 **Germany** Leverkusen axe Schmidt
78 **Brazil** The unloved World Cup stadiums
80 **Argentina** Strike ends but problems remain
82 **Belize** The minnows of Central America

PLUS 74 Global diary 84 Golden Shoe 85 Results, tables, fixtures 87 Squads

# In Pictures

**The global game caught on camera**

**HOLLAND...Bryan Linssen of Groningen (in white) and Daley Sinkgraven of Ajax clash in an Eredivisie game**

USA...Portland Timbers' mascot, Timber Joey, cuts a "Timber slice" after they score against Minnesota United

GERMANY...Hamburg defender Mergim Mavraj gets to grips with Bayern Munich's Thomas Muller

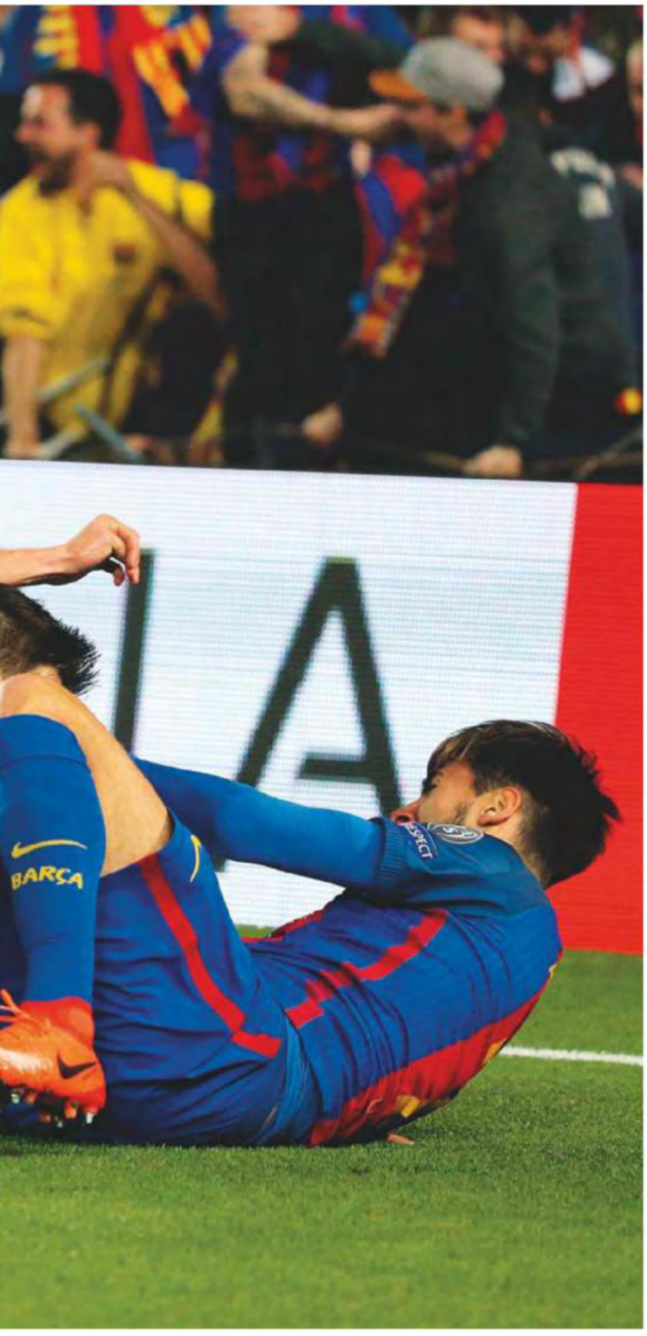
SPAIN...Barcelona celebrate Sergi Roberto's winning goal in a dramatic comeback against Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League

**PICTURES OF THE MONTH QR CODE**

To see more of the best photos from the month, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the images by logging on to http://po.st/QXHHsM

**BAHAMAS...Panama's Gilberto Rangel (left) competes with Diego Rodriguez of Mexico during the Final of the CONCACAF Beach Soccer Championship in Nassau**

**MEXICO...Uriel Antuna celebrates after scoring for Mexico against El Salvador in a CONCACAF Under-20 qualifier**



**BRAZIL...fans of Corinthians light flares during a match against Palmeiras in the Sao Paulo State Championship**

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# FROM THE EDITOR

The new season of the Chinese Super League kicked off in early March, with the opening game, between Guizhou Zhicheng and Liaoning Whowin receiving plenty of attention from Western media – but, unfortunately, for all the wrong reasons.

Many seized on the images of empty stands as proof that the league had pots of corporate cash but no support from local fans.

However, the reports neglected to mention that the game was being played behind closed doors as punishment for a promotion-celebrating pitch invasion by Guizhou fans at the end of the previous season.

The next day, more than 210,000 fans watched the other seven games.

Average crowds in the Chinese top flight were over 24,000 last year – a figure that is comfortably above Ligue 1 and Serie A and not that far behind the Spanish Liga.

This month, we feature the Chinese Super League (page 48) in depth for the first time – and it will not be the last time. Money may be a malevolent force at so many levels of the modern game but we can no longer ignore the calibre of players and coaches now working in China.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

Average crowds in the Chinese top flight were over 24,000 last year – a figure comfortably above Ligue 1 and Serie A

## 10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH


1 Champions League knockout stage ..... p13
2 Hayatou ousted as CAF chief ..... p10
3 Luis Enrique leaving Barcelona ..... p26
4 Zdenek Zeman returns to Serie A ..... p20
5 Raymond Kopa dies ..... p22
6 Bayer Leverkusen sack Schmidt ..... p76
7 Roma stadium developments ..... p75
8 Xabi Alonso announces retirement ..... p25
9 Messi leads Golden Shoe standings ..... p84
10 Swedish league kicks off ..... p72




AFRICA

## Hayatou ousted as CAF president

Issa Hayatou's command of African football is at an end after 29 years as CAF president. The 70-year-old was beaten, 34 votes to 20, by challenger Ahmad Ahmad of Madagascar in the election at CAF Congress in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Ahmad, aged 57, became Madagascar FA chief in 2003 and is only the seventh president in CAF's 60-year history. In his campaign he promised greater financial transparency and a potential reorganisation of CAF competitions.

Hayatou was one of the last representatives of the disgraced old guard who had shored up a corrupt culture within FIFA. He has not been implicated in the criminal investigations being run

**Winner...new CAF president Ahmad Ahmad**

"Mr Blatter's conduct in the matter [was] reckless. The credit awarded to Mr Platini amounted to a gift as he was not entitled to such credit"

**The Court of Arbitration for Sport accuses Sepp Blatter (right) over a previously unknown $1m "pension top-up payment" made to former UEFA boss Michel Platini**

**Going...Issa Hayatou (left)**

but he was rapped over the knuckles by the IOC for accepting a disputed cash donation from ISL – FIFA's bankrupt former marketing partner.

The Cameroonian did all he could to prevent the election of Gianni Infantino in February last year as FIFA president in succession to banned Sepp Blatter and paid for it by not only being removed from the presidency of the powerful finance committee but in being kicked off the panel altogether.

Infantino has denied involving himself in any of the recent elections in the regional confederations, but his attitude to Hayatou appeared obvious.

A key factor for Ahmad was that he was able to lobby for and build support from within the executive committee and he drew support from beyond the disaffected south of Africa.

The Nigerian federation defied its own government and came out in public support of Ahmad, while Hayatou's fellow countryman Samuel Eto'o – the four-times African Footballer of the Year – also called for a change at the top.

Hayatou had to fight off criticism of the monopolistic deal to grant Lagardere an extension from 2017 to 2028 in its media-rights deal without allegedly undergoing a tender process.

Ahmad is now certain to review the Lagardere contract after benefiting from the pace with which so many of Hayatou's critics lost their inhibitions about going public with criticism.

*Keir Radnedge*

# HEROES & VILLAINS

**Brothers...Danny (right) and Nicky Cowley**

## DANNY & NICKY COWLEY

The brothers, who a year ago were teaching PE at an Essex comprehensive school, guided Lincoln City into the FA Cup quarter-finals at the expense of Premier League Burnley and became the first non-league club for 103 years to reach the last eight of the competition.

## FRANCIS KONE

Slovacko's Togolese striker saved the life of Bohemians' Martin Berkovec who nearly swallowed his tongue in a collision with team-mate Daniel Krch during a Czech league game. Kone used his fingers to move the goalkeeper's tongue and stop him from choking.

## KEVIN GAMEIRO

The French striker scored La Liga's fastest hat-trick for 22 years, netting three times in four minutes and 43 seconds of Atletico Madrid's 4-1 win against Sporting Gijon.

## CHAPECOENSE

Only a few months after the plane crash that killed 19 players and staff, the Brazilian club made their Libertadores Cup debut away to Zulia of Venezuela and won 2-1 to top their group.

**Top...Chapacoense won on their Libertadores debut**

## BASTIA

The Ligue 1 side were handed a suspended one-point deduction and ordered to close their East Stand for three home games after spectators directed racist abuse at Nice striker Mario Balotelli in January's 1-1 draw.

**Guilty...Atletico Madrid defender Lucas Hernandez**

## LUCAS HERNANDEZ

Atletico Madrid's 21-year-old defender was ordered to carry out 31 days of community service in relation to a domestic violence charge after an incident involving his ex-girlfriend Amelia Llorente in February.

## EDINHO

The son of Pele was sentenced to 12 years and 10 months in prison for drug trafficking and money laundering.

**Ridicule...Mitchell Weiser (sat on floor)**

## MITCHELL WEISER

The Hertha Berlin defender was ridiculed for his flamboyant dive in a delayed response to a clash with Borussia Dortmund's Ousmane Dembele.

"Knowing that our fans are fighters and not hooligans, perhaps we should make a sport out of battles between supporters"

**Russian MP Igor Lebedev puts in a winning entry for the crassest suggestion of the year**

# GOALS we'd like to see again

**To see video footage of these goals, and many more that we have selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to http://po.st/UbJXmi**

**1 NEYMAR**
**Barcelona v Celta Vigo**
Receives a pass from Lionel Messi inside the area and dinks the ball over the advancing keeper.

**2 ANTOINE GRIEZMANN**
**Atletico Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna**
Plays a double one-two with team-mates before curling home a first-time shot.

**3 FEDERICO BERNARDESCHI**
**Fiorentina v Borussia Monchengladbach**
Drills a rising free-kick into the top corner during a Europa League game.

**4 RADAMEL FALCAO**
**Monaco v Manchester City**
Runs on to a long pass, beats John Stones and finishes with a deft chip over Willy Caballero.

**5 SEBASTIAN MELGAR**
**Bolivia under-17s v Colombia under-17s**
With his back to goal, he loops his foot around his marker and scores with a fantastic backheel.

**6 EDINSON CAVANI**
**Paris Saint-Germain v Marseille**
Javier Pastore flicks Marco Verratti's pass into the Uruguayan's path and he finishes with a deft flick beyond the goalkeeper.

# WINNERS

**JOSE MOURINHO**
Equalled Brian Clough and Alex Ferguson with his fourth League Cup success as Manchester United beat Southampton.

**THE NEW SAINTS**
Won the Welsh Premier League for the sixth season in a row, extending their record haul to 11 titles.

**CARLO ANCELOTTI**
Celebrated his 1,000th game as a coach in style as Bayern Munich won 8-0 against Hamburg.

# LOSERS

**CHAN YUEN-TING**
The first woman to lead a team in the AFC Champions League, her Eastern side were thrashed 7-0 by Guangzhou Evergrande.

**MINNESOTA UNITED**
MLS debutants were beaten 5-1 by Portland Timbers in their first match in the top flight.

**ARSENAL**
Thrashed 10-2 on aggregate by Bayern Munich and out of the Champions League in the round of 16 for a seventh consecutive season.

"Thank you for this. I appreciate my fans, my wife and my girlfriend...I mean my wife, sorry"

**Free State Stars' Mohammed Anas gets a little confused in a live TV interview after being named man of the match against Ajax Cape Town in the South African PSL**

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Things we learned...from the Champions League round of 16

**MONACO ARE CURRENTLY THE MOST EXCITING TEAM IN EUROPE**
The French side are the first team in Champions League history to go through in a knockout tie after conceding five goals in the first leg. In Kylian Mbappe – aged 18 years and two months – they had the youngest player to score two goals in the knockout stage since 2004.

**CHEATS STILL PROSPER**
Jamie Vardy, with a dive, won the free-kick from which Leicester City scored their opening goal in the second-leg victory against Sevilla. Similarly, Luis Suarez fooled German referee Deniz Aytekin into awarding an injury-time penalty against Paris Saint-Germain as Barcelona pulled off a remarkable six-goal comeback at Camp Nou.

**ADIOS, SEVILLA**
Defeat to Leicester meant that the winners of the Europa League for the past three years were out of European competition for the first time in four seasons.

**ENGLISH CLUBS ARE STILL THE GREAT UNDERPERFORMERS**
Leicester's victory over Sevilla meant England have now had more teams reach the Champions League quarter-finals than any other nation (eight). But only two

Out...Arsenal

Premier League teams (Manchester United in 2011 and Chelsea in 2012) have reached the Final in the past seven years.

**A NEW LOW FOR GUARDIOLA**
Defeat for Manchester City by Monaco was the first time that a side coached by Pep Guardiola has gone out of the Champions League at the last-16 stage.

**SPAIN IN THE DRIVING SEAT**
There are three Spanish teams in the quarter-finals for the fifth consecutive season, a feat that has been matched by no other country.

Captain fantastic...Wes Morgan celebrates his opening goal for Leicester against Sevilla

**KING IKER**
Porto may have lost to Juventus but Iker Casillas overtook Paolo Maldini as the player with the most appearances in European competitions (175).

**SEVENTH HELL FOR ARSENAL**
Arsenal's thrashing by Bayern Munich was their seventh successive exit at the last-16 stage. The 10-2 aggregate defeat was also the worst suffered by an English side in the Champions League.

Tricked...Luis Suarez wins a penalty against PSG

## QUARTER FINAL DRAW

**FIRST LEGS**

**APRIL 11**
Borussia Dortmund v Monaco

Juventus v Barcelona

**APRIL 12**
Atletico Madrid v Leicester City

Real Madrid v Bayern Munich

**SECOND LEGS**

**APRIL 18**
Leicester City v Atletico Madrid

Bayern Munich v Real Madrid

**APRIL 19**
Monaco v Borussia Dortmund

Barcelona v Juventus

Reminder... Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang

**BARCA NO MATCH FOR ISTANBUL**
Barcelona's six goals against Paris Saint-Germain was an astonishing comeback but surely cannot match the 2005 Final between Liverpool and Milan in Istanbul. Barca were aided by questionable refereeing decisions and a remarkable collapse by PSG.

**A REMINDER FROM AUBAMEYANG**
On the same night that the world was marvelling at Barcelona's thrilling comeback against PSG, Dortmund's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored a hat-trick against Benfica to remind everybody of his goalscoring talents.

# Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

## Time for FIFA to take control of the game once more

In one of the more coherent moments of his benighted 18 years at its helm, Sepp Blatter once told me that the role of FIFA was both to promote the development of football around the globe and to ensure its exercise in a unified manner, whether in the World Cup or a pub league. But just how relevant is the game's governing body to the totality of world football these days?

Down the years, much of that protection for the game was provided by the law-making International Football Association Board. With its power split between one vote apiece for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and four votes for FIFA, it was able to ward off all manner of junk ideas.

These included several of the ideas regurgitated of late by Marco Van Basten, who used his new-found technical development platform at FIFA to air such nonsensical whims as the abolition of offside.

In London for the recent annual meeting of IFAB, Van Basten was unable to smuggle any of his plans into the debate. However, much of the press briefing which followed was taken up with progression towards the introduction of video assistant referees (VARs), with current FIFA president Gianni Infantino still hoping that around 20-plus experiments across the world, including MLS and the German Bundesliga, will lead IFAB to grant approval next year for its use at the World Cup finals in Russia.

"Using VARs at the World Cup is our ambition," says Infantino. "The little hiccups so far have been mainly concerned with the expertise and training that the referees have to make, and they will be able to take much faster decisions when they are much more used to the system.

"The experience we made in the Club World Cup last December in Japan showed that for the referee it's not a big change and he can learn how to use it very quickly.

"We will test it with all the candidates to be World Cup referees in our competitions this year and, in addition, there will be seminars for them, so I'm very confident.

"The VAR will not bring perfection but the positive thing is that there are no negatives. Wherever it is used you can be sure the right decision will be taken."

**Trial...VARs at December's Club World Cup in Japan**

> "The VAR will not bring perfection but the positive thing is that there are no negatives. Wherever it is used you can be sure the right decision will be taken"
>
> *Gianni Infantino*

That's all very well, but rushing the project forward just to suit the FIFA president sounds like running the risk of discovering that hasty legislation equals bad legislation.

Which brings us back to the issue of FIFA's relevance. Apart from the brave, headline-grabbing words about VARs, IFAB came up with this summarising slab of small print: "The AGM extended the 'Modifications' section of the Laws allowing national football associations more freedom to modify the organisational Laws for the lower levels of football, eg the number of substitutions and duration of play, to help them develop their domestic football by encouraging more people to take part.

"National football associations will decide at which levels the modifications are applied in their domestic [lower level] football. Additionally... the proposals to allow temporary dismissals (sin bins) for yellow card offences were approved for youth, grassroots and disability football, as it is the case for return substitutions."

In other words, one law for the rich and one for the poor. The game is no longer universal and the lawmakers are the ones splitting the difference and widening the chasm.

Much of the blame here belongs to not only Blatter but to reform guru Mark Pieth, and the reason lies in the reformist plan to streamline the governance of the world game which encouraged FIFA to make a land grab for the notionally independent IFAB.

While the lawmaking body possesses its own identity, all of its work and administration is run by and through FIFA, including the addition of two advisory committees keen to justify their own existence. Hence, there is a continuing dribble of fiddles and fuddles to the laws and a raft of experiments for which the grassroots game is expected to be the guinea pig.

Experimentation has been around for years. In the late 1960s, I remember watching an army football match in England which was one of several games in which the use of two

referees was trialled. Nothing came of it – though it might prove more valuable than Michel Platini's goal-line assistants.

Here again is a regulatory nonsense. Platini promoted the additional assistant referees (AARs) as his counter to the push for goal-line technology. They can make a difference, but too often they do not make the difference when they should.

Platini may have gone, but the AARs are alive and well. Yet only in Europe. No one else uses them, so the system cannot be put in place at the World Cup finals. So should IFAB be permitting them at all?

Stewart Regan, chief executive of the Scottish Football Association, noted that where IFAB had once been hesitant about change, now it was confidently eager to meet new challenges. Martin Glenn, CEO of the Football Association, described IFAB's responsibility to the development of the game as "promotion not prevention".

Whether promoting football is enhanced by playing with its laws is a moot point. On the other hand, if FIFA were not managing IFAB, what relevance would it have to grassroots football?

# Qatar 2022 to offer hope

Sport in general, and football in particular, possesses a happy ability to cut through the world's troubles, whether military, political, racial or linguistic. And, surprisingly for all its critics, the Qatar World Cup has been promoted as a vehicle to prove that point in a very particular way.

After all the noise and fury since December 2, 2010 – when the then FIFA executive committee awarded the Middle East its first finals – there has been an optimistic proposal from Hassan Al Thawadi, secretary-general of the organising Supreme Committee, to use the 2022 World Cup to encourage better understanding and tolerance between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

He has harked back to the example of "La Convivencia" and discussed how the Qatar World Cup might recreate the concept, albeit over a mere four weeks in the modern Gulf rather than four centuries in medieval Spain. Those long-gone days suggested a world which could be all about "engagement over exclusion – a counter to today's narrative of fear, distrust and polarisation".

According to Al Thawadi: "Those of us who understand the importance of coexistence know the importance of creating platforms – and sport, football, is one of those platforms."

Qatar and FIFA both have their own well-rehearsed challenges, but after all the howls of anguish in 2010, and the years leading up to FIFAGate, a little optimism does no harm.

**Proposal...Al Thawadi**

After all, the World Cups in South Africa and Brazil were written off by the global media as disasters-in-waiting yet they went ahead on schedule. And what does the game remember now? Not much more than last-minute winning goals from Andres Iniesta and Mario Gotze.

Just playing football is, indeed, winning.

# MOVERS & SHAKERS

*Keeping tabs on the blazers*

## FRANZ BECKENBAUER

According to German newspaper *Bild*, Swiss prosecutors have uncovered a payment to Franz Beckenbauer that was transferred to a bank account in Gibraltar. The report suggested the payment of at least €1.7million was made to Beckenbauer, as well as his

**Payment...Franz Beckenbauer**

close associates Fedor Radmann and Andreas Abold. The payment, though not illegal, was believed to be for Beckenbauer's work as a consultant for the South African Football Association.

## CARLO TAVECCHIO

The 73-year-old has been re-elected as president of the Italian federation for a second term. In 2014, he caused an outcry when he made a comment about a fictitious African player he named Opti Poba "eating bananas". He was subsequently banned from holding any position within FIFA for six months while UEFA imposed a similar sanction.

**Ban...Tavecchio**

## ALEXEI SMERTIN

The former midfielder has been named Russian Football Union anti-racism and discrimination inspector ahead of the 2018 World Cup. In 2015, Smertin was criticised for saying: "There's no racism in Russia, because it doesn't exist. Racism in Russia is like fashion. It comes from abroad, from different countries. It was never, ever here before. Ten years ago, some fans may have given a banana to black guys – it was just for fun."

## LUIS CHIRIBOGA

Luis Chiriboga, ex-president of the Ecuadorian Football Federation, was sentenced to 10 years in prison in Ecuador for his role in the FIFAGate corruption scandal.

# Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

## Sacking of Bento and Ranieri was cruel and contemptible

Managers are forever the convenient and easily jettisoned scapegoats at a football club – but even in the easy-come, easy-go culture of the modern game, we have just witnessed two of the most cruel and contemptible dismissals in its history.

Olympiakos were seven points clear at the top of the Greek Super League, had reached the semi-finals of their domestic cup and were about to play in the Europa League round of 16 when coach Paulo Bento was summarily sacked after three successive league defeats induced unfathomable panic.

Even more risible was Leicester City's decision to terminate the contract of Claudio Ranieri, barely a few months after he had guided them to the most fairy-tale triumph of all.

Yes, Leicester had suffered some poor results in defence of their impossible Premier League title, but they had just re-grouped with a creditable 2-1 away defeat to Sevilla in the Champions League to prompt realistic hopes of reaching the quarter-finals.

Ranieri turned down an offer to become coach of Italy's national team last summer to stay at Leicester. His loyalty was but a straw in the wind. His dismissal, correctly, shocked many people in football. Gary Lineker called it "gut-wrenching" and a brigade of ex-player pundits said it was "disgusting".

Panic...Paulo Bento was sacked when top of the Greek league

Yet you could also find serious opinion in favour of Ranieri's exit, with the argument that sentiment for a charming manager should not sway the mood when relegation was a threat.

Mural...in praise of Claudio Ranieri

Some call this brutal realism; to me it is a vivid commentary on the colossal corruption of spirit and values in professional football.

Through the fog of hype and hysteria around the world's favourite sport, have we forgotten how to see right from wrong?

It is also a commentary on the failure to understand the actual reality of football – which is that clubs who keep faith with good managers are those who thrive most securely in the medium and long term.

This is not hearsay. All the empirical evidence from several studies shows that replacing football managers has little positive impact on changing the fortunes of a club. It happens occasionally, but usually not.

Look at the reality of the current Premier League, where only seven of the 20 managers have been at their club for more than two years. Among them are Burnley, Stoke City, Bournemouth and West Bromwich Albion, where stability has delivered the precious prize of mid-table security.

They buck the trend. At most clubs, and in most countries, owners panic as the pressure bites. Only seven sides in the relatively sane German Bundesliga have a coach who has been in charge for more than 12 months.

> Football has become like fashion. A manager lasts only a season, and then a new model and a new look is de rigeur

Football has become like fashion. A manager lasts only a season, and then a new model and a new look is de rigeur.

Is it any wonder that West Brom veteran

Tony Pulis has this advice for younger colleagues, saying: "You're not a real manager these days until you've been sacked three times."

Only then, reasons Pulis, will a manager understand the reality of football – that ability, talent, loyalty, dedication and hard work are no protection against being kicked out of your job on a whim.

One man stands alone in all the mayhem. Arsene Wenger, has managed Arsenal for more than 20 years, in which time they have won a cascade of trophies, played bewitching football and financed the development of a magnificent new stadium. He has resisted pressure for his exit many times and long ago coined the phrase that sums up modern football when he said: "Every defeat now is a crisis."

Now 68, his departure is coming soon, whether at the end of this season or in the next year or two, with opinion fiercely divided among Arsenal fans. Some clamour for the energy and hunger of a new manager, others fear it will bring a downturn similar to that suffered when Alex Ferguson retired at Manchester United.

What is certain is that Wenger's exit will be a seminal moment. Never again will we see a 20-year reign of a manager at a high-level team...because no club will have the courage or the common sense required. WS

**Seminal...Arsene Wenger takes training at Arsenal, way back in 1996**

## REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

### 1 NEWS FLASH: YOU'RE SACKED

Working as a TV pundit can get you fired in Finland. Simo Valakari lost his job as SJK coach after working as a studio talking head on English Premier League matches – while his own side were playing a pre-season friendly with Jaro.

SJK chairman Raimo Sarajarvi said: "It is not acceptable that he was in the studio while the team played."

In 2015, Ilves manager Keith Armstrong missed his side's defeat at SJK as he was in a TV studio watching Premier League games.

### 2 OLD MAN MIURA

At the grand old age of 50 years and seven days, Japanese striker Kazuyoshi Miura has overtaken Stanley Matthews as the oldest-ever player in competitive football.

Miura extended his record as the oldest player to appear in the J.League second division when he started in Yokohama's first game of the season, against Matsumoto Yamaga.

Miura, who scored 55 goals in 89 games for Japan before his international retirement in 2000, lasted 65 minutes before being replaced.

"It's not so much about numbers. More how you play," he said.

**Record... Kazuyoshi Miura**

**Disgusted...Long An's keeper turns his back**

### 3 BANNED FOR MAKING A STAND

Two players from Vietnamese top-flight side Long An and their coach were banned after they allowed opponents Ho Chi Minh City to score three late goals in protest over a disputed penalty decision.

With the score at 2-2, the whole Long An team initially walked off the pitch when referee Nguyen Trong Thu pointed to the spot in the 90th minute, but then returned – only for goalkeeper Nguyen Minh Nhut to turn his back as the kick was taken and allow the hosts to score.

His team-mates then stood motionless as their opponents added another two goals to win 5-2.

The Vietnamese Football Federation handed two-year bans to keeper Minh Nhut and skipper Huynh Quang Thanh, and suspended coach Ngo Quang Sang, for three years.

### 4 NOT GIVING UP

Former Belgium defender Anthony Vanden Borre has reversed his decision to retire – and joined TP Mazembe in DR Congo.

Vanden Borre, who had spells at Anderlecht, Fiorentina, Genoa and Portsmouth, among other, will be returning to his roots, as his new club play close to his birthplace, Likasi.

**Back home... Anthony Vanden Borre**

## "I did not belong to Chelsea, so I was left out"

**Nigerian striker Abiola Dauda, who quit Dutch side Vitesse for Atromitos of Greece in January, blames his lack of game time on the Arnhem club's reliance on the English side's loanees**

## *Andrea BELOTTI (Torino)*

Nicknamed *Il Gallo* ("the rooster"), Italy's latest striking sensation scored an eight-minute hat-trick against his former club Palermo to become the first Torino player since Benjamin Santos in 1950 to score 22 goals in a season.

After a slow start following his summer 2015 move to Turin for €7.5million, the last 12 months have been explosive for the 23-year-old and he now sits in the top echelons of the ESM Golden Shoe rankings (see page 84), rubbing shoulders with such names as Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani.

Already a fixture in Italy's national set-up, with three goals in five internationals, Torino have inserted a €100m buyout clause in his contract for non-Italian clubs – with Manchester City being the latest suitors – in a bid to keep their man.

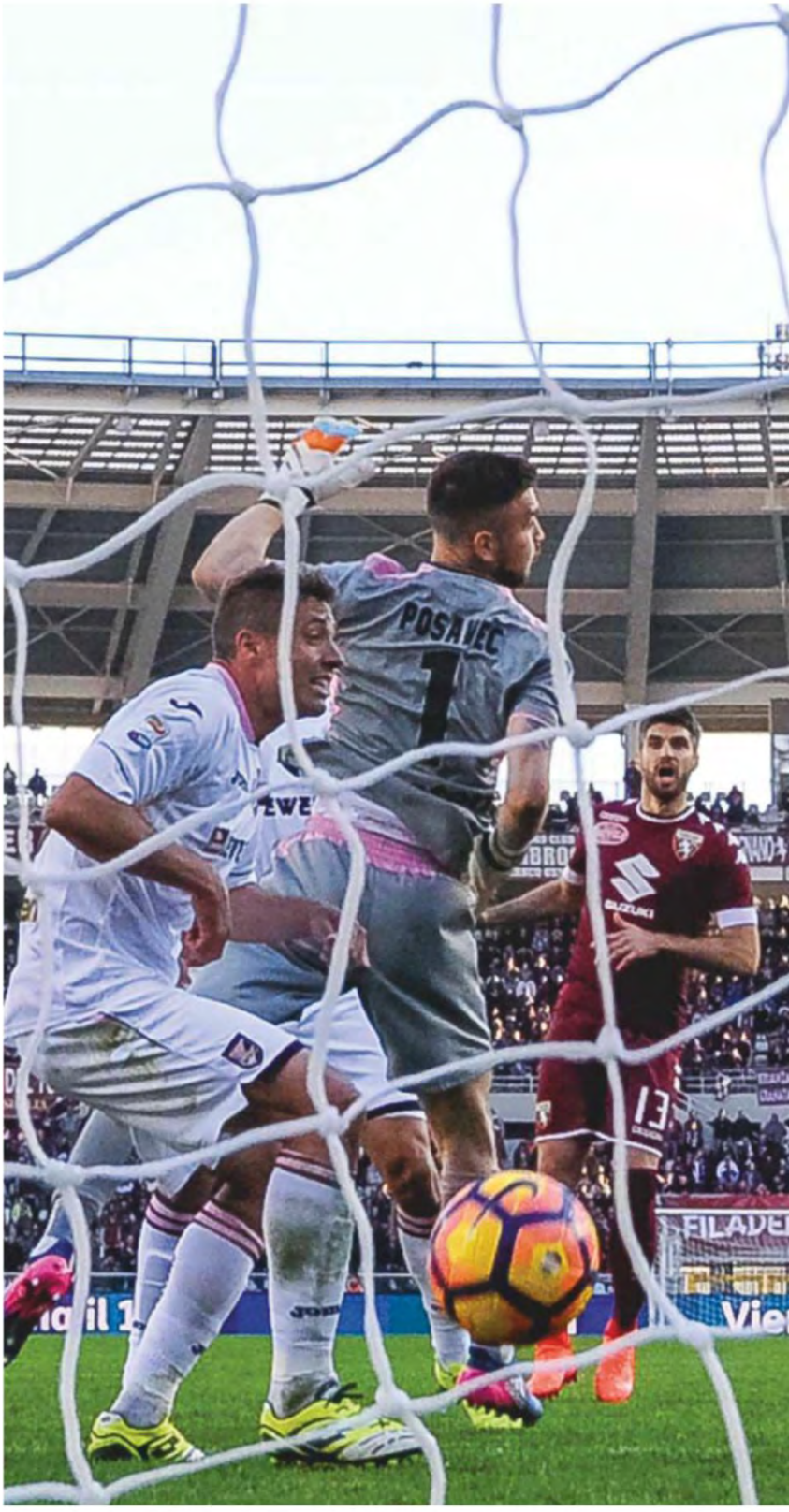
**Hat-trick...Belotti (above) gets his first goal against Palermo (right)**

**Lars STINDL** (Borussia Monchengladbach)

When selecting new players, Germany coach Joachim Low usually prefers youthful potential to hot-streak experience. However, he might just be ready to make an exception in the case of 28-year-old Gladbach striker.

Since the end of the Bundesliga winter

**Hot streak...Stindl**



"Our club doctor was only really interested in traditional Chinese medicine such as acupuncture. In football, that's not so helpful"

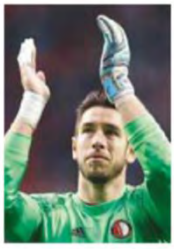
**Recently retired Bosnian playmaker Zvjezdan Misimovic hits out at the standard of medical back-up at his former Chinese club Beijing Renhe**

break in late January, Stindl has been converting chances left, right and centre, and scored a memorable hat-trick in a Europa League round-of-16 tie against Fiorentina – a 12-minute blitz which helped his team turn round a three-goal deficit to win 4-3 on aggregate.

**Kevin STROOTMAN** (Roma)
The Dutch midfielder is currently enjoying his best spell in Serie A after losing almost two years of his career – and missing the 2014 World Cup – to a serious knee injury.

**Youri TIELEMANS** (Anderlecht)
Long considered to be one of Belgium's most exciting youngsters, the 19-year-old midfielder reminded everybody of his talent with a series of outstanding long-range goals – including two in the space of two minutes against Oostende.

**Jordi MBOULA** (Barcelona)
The 17-year-old earned comparisons with Lionel Messi after scoring an incredible solo goal in a UEFA Youth League game against Borussia Dortmund.



**Riley McGREE** (Adelaide United)
The teenager was a surprise inclusion in an extended Australia squad for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers. At 18, he had made just 13 A-League appearances before being called into a 30-man squad by national coach Ange Postecoglou.

**Brad JONES** (Feyenoord)
The Australian goalkeeper was in outstanding form as the league leaders became the first team in the Eredivisie's 61-year history to begin a calendar year with six clean sheets. Jones also became the Rotterdam club's first keeper since Ed De Goey in 1996-97 to keep 14 clean sheets in a season.

**Kai HAVERTZ** (Bayer Leverkusen)
The midfielder played in his side's 4-2 Champions League defeat by Atletico Madrid and became the first player born after the 1999 Final to start a game in the competition.

**Alphonso DAVIES** (Vancouver Whitecaps)
The 16-year-old Liberian-born refugee scored one goal and helped set-up another as the Canadian side beat New York Red Bulls 2-0 to reach the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Champions League, winning 3-1 on aggregate.

"Mario needs calm, empathy and support – and we'll provide it for him"

**Borussia Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel (left) responds to the news that midfielder Mario Gotze had been ruled out for an unspecified period with a "metabolic disorder"**

## Headliner

# Zeman back in Serie A with Pescara

### Czech coach takes on mission impossible

The 69-year-old Czech coach Zdenek Zeman has been handed an apparent "mission impossible" after being called in to replace Massimo Oddo as coach of Pescara, who were bottom of Serie A.

Under Oddo, Pescara often played good football but their results were a disaster. When Zeman took over they had gone 24 games without a win, were nine points adrift of the second-bottom side and seemed certain for an instant relegation back to Serie B. Even those nine points were misleading as three were awarded after a 2-1 loss to Sassuolo in which their opponents fielded a non-registered player.

With things looking far from promising, Zeman avoided making any promises on his coaching return, saying only: "I am here to see if we can have a bit of fun."

And then, in his first game in charge, Pescara went out and played their socks off, recording their first on-the-field win of the season by beating hapless Genoa 5-0.

While that result may not mean much in the big scheme of things for Pescara, the inspirational Zeman had, for one afternoon at least, once again worked his magic.

As he pointed out after the Genoa game, his side will need to start winning with Juventus-like regularity to secure survival. But hope springs eternal in Pescara, with Zeman offering: "You can be bottom of the table but you can do so with dignity."

The point about Zeman is that he is something of a talisman coach – and not just for Pescara fans. A past boss of big-name teams such as Lazio, Roma and Napoli, with his belief in attacking football his sides have always entertained, even if their defensive work has often been on the "emotional" side.

Five seasons ago, in a previous spell with Pescara, Zeman won the Serie B title. That endeared him for ever to the club faithful, even if he left the following season to return to Roma. And for most Italians he remains an iconic figure for his outspoken observations about the domestic game.

Nineteen years ago, Zeman made the controversial call for Italian football to "get out of the chemist's laboratory" and told of his surprise at the "muscular explosion" of certain Juventus players. In short, he seemed to be accusing Juve of systematic doping practices.

His accusations prompted a five-year trial in Turin, which concluded in 2007 with the acquittal of Juventus, club director Antonio Giraudo and club doctor Riccardo Agricola. The case, however, prompted more questions than answers.

For example, how come Juve had a medical arsenal which, in the words of presiding judge Giuseppe Casalbore, was equivalent to "the normal stock of a small sized hospital"? Casalbore also complained about a lack of co-operation from the Juventus players called to give evidence, saying in court: "The problem here is that we need answers to questions.

"If all of you come here and sort of talk and then don't talk at all, it's all the more alarming. You don't really think that when you tell us that you don't know what your team-mates are doing in the dressing room, we are going to blindly believe you?"

Juventus players such as Alessandro Del Piero and Gianluca Vialli made no bones about their distaste for Zeman, with Vialli branding him a "terrorist".

In the summer of 1998, I asked Zeman about the scale of doping practices in Italian football. After considering his answer carefully, he replied: "I don't know about the size, the dimensions of the problem, but I do know that doping practices have been around for years in sports like athletics, swimming, cycling, weightlifting and so on.

"Do you really believe that they have not moved into football too?"

In April, on match day 32 of the season, Pescara are at home to Juventus. The visiting fans are sure to offer him anything other than a warm welcome.

*Paddy Agnew*

> "Doping practices have been around for years in sports like athletics, swimming, cycling, weightlifting and so on. Do you really believe that they have not moved into football too?"
>
> Zdenek Zeman, in 1998

**Back in charge...Zeman instructs Pescara's Alexandru Mitrita**

# ESM XI

## EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

FEBRUARY 2017

**HOW IT WORKS**
Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

**SEASON RANKINGS**
Cumulative votes through the season

### GOALKEEPERS

| | |
|---|---|
| Thibaut COURTOIS (Chelsea) | 22 |
| Jan OBLAK (Atletico Madrid) | 10 |
| Gianluigi DONNARUMMA (Milan) | 8 |
| Gianluigi BUFFON (Juventus) | 7 |
| David DE GEA (Manchester United) | 7 |
| Samir HANDANOVIC (Internazionale) | 3 |
| Manuel NEUER (Bayern Munich) | 3 |
| EDERSON (Benfica) | 2 |
| Kasper SCHMEICHEL (Leicester City) | 2 |
| Diego ALVES (Valencia) | 1 |
| Willy CABALLERO (Manchester City) | 1 |
| Timo HORN (Cologne) | 1 |
| Brad JONES (Feyenoord) | 1 |
| Bernd LENO (Bayer Leverkusen) | 1 |
| Simon MIGNOLET (Liverpool) | 1 |
| Keylor NAVAS (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| RUI PATRICIO (Sporting) | 1 |
| Yann SOMMER (Borussia M'gladbach) | 1 |
| Maarten STEKELENBURG (Everton) | 1 |
| Wojciech SZCZESNY (Roma) | 1 |
| Javi VARAS (Las Palmas) | 1 |

### DEFENDERS

| | |
|---|---|
| David LUIZ (Chelsea) | 20 |
| Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid) | 18 |
| Cesar AZPILICUETA (Chelsea) | 13 |
| MARCELO (Real Madrid) | 12 |
| ALEX SANDRO (Juventus) | 11 |
| Philipp LAHM (Bayern Munich) | 10 |
| Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid) | 8 |
| Sergi ROBERTO (Barcelona) | 8 |
| Djibril SIDIBE (Monaco) | 8 |
| Rapahel VARANE (Real Madrid) | 8 |
| Marcos ALONSO (Chelsea) | 7 |
| Giorgio CHIELLINI (Juventus) | 7 |
| Laurent KOSCIELNY (Arsenal) | 7 |
| Filipe LUIS (Atletico Madrid) | 7 |
| Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona) | 7 |
| Leonardo BONUCCI (Juventus) | 6 |
| Benjamin MENDY (Monaco) | 6 |
| Victor MOSES (Chelsea) | 6 |
| David ALABA (Bayern Munich) | 5 |
| Jordi ALBA (Barcelona) | 5 |
| Mats HUMMELS (Bayern Munich) | 5 |
| Thomas MEUNIER (Paris Saint-Germain) | 5 |
| Nicolas OTAMENDI (Manchester City) | 5 |
| Stefan SAVIC (Atletico Madrid) | 5 |
| Samuel UMTITI (Barcelona) | 5 |
| Dani ALVES (Juventus) | 4 |
| Hector BELLERIN (Arsenal) | 4 |
| Gary CAHILL (Chelsea) | 4 |
| Mattia CALDARA (Atalanta) | 4 |
| Kamil GLIK (Monaco) | 4 |
| Raphael GUERRERO (Borussia Dortmund) | 4 |
| James MILNER (Liverpool) | 4 |
| Daniele RUGANI (Juventus) | 4 |
| Kyle WALKER (Tottenham Hotspur) | 4 |
| Toby ALDERWEIRELD (Tottenham Hotspur) | 3 |
| Nathaniel CLYNE (Liverpool) | 3 |
| MARQUINHOS (Paris Saint-Germain) | 3 |
| MIRANDA (Internazionale) | 3 |
| Sokratis PAPASTATHOPOULOS (B D'mund) | 3 |
| Nicolas PAREJA (Sevilla) | 3 |
| Ricardo PEREIRA (Nice) | 3 |
| Federico FAZIO (Roma) | 2 |
| Sead KOLASINAC (Schalke) | 2 |
| Kostas MANOLAS (Roma) | 2 |
| Shkodran MUSTAFI (Arsenal) | 2 |
| PEPE (Real Madrid) | 2 |
| Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain) | 2 |
| Antonio VALENCIA (Manchester United) | 2 |
| Raul ALBIOL (Napoli) | 1 |
| Eric BAILLY (Manchester United) | 1 |
| Leighton BAINES (Everton) | 1 |
| Andrea BARZAGLI (Juventus) | 1 |
| Joao CANCELO (Valencia) | 1 |
| Daniel CARVAJAL (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| Seamus COLEMAN (Everton) | 1 |
| Danilo D'AMBROSIO (Internazionale) | 1 |
| DANILO (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| DANTE (Nice) | 1 |
| Stefan DE VRIJ (Lazio) | 1 |
| FELIPE (Porto) | 1 |
| Jonas HECTOR (Cologne) | 1 |
| Benedikt HOWEDES (Schalke) | 1 |
| Stefan ILSANKER (RB Leipzig) | 1 |
| Branislav IVANOVIC (Chelsea) | 1 |
| JEMERSON (Monaco) | 1 |
| Phil JONES (Manchester United) | 1 |
| JUANFRAN (Atletico Madrid) | 1 |
| Presnel KIMPEMBE (Paris Saint-Germain) | 1 |
| Dejan LOVREN (Liverpool) | 1 |
| MARIANO (Sevilla) | 1 |
| Inigo MARTINEZ (Real Sociedad) | 1 |
| Joel MATIP (Liverpool) | 1 |
| Gabriel MERCADO (Sevilla) | 1 |
| NACHO (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| Cesar NAVAS (Rostov) | 1 |
| Kyriakos PAPADOPOULOS (Hamburg) | 1 |
| Winston REID (West Ham United) | 1 |
| Marcel RISSE (Cologne) | 1 |
| Antonio RUDIGER (Roma) | 1 |
| Marcel SCHMELZER (Borussia Dortmund) | 1 |
| Nelson SEMEDO (Benfica) | 1 |
| Kostas STAFYLIDIS (Augsburg) | 1 |
| Jan VERTONGHEN (Tottenham Hotspur) | 1 |
| Jesus VALLEJO (Eintracht Frankfurt) | 1 |
| Virgil VAN DIJK (Southampton) | 1 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | |
|---|---|
| N'Golo KANTE (Chelsea) | 15 |
| THIAGO Alcantara (Bayern Munich) | 13 |
| Eden HAZARD (Chelsea) | 12 |
| Philippe COUTINHO (Liverpool) | 11 |
| Dele ALLI (Tottenham Hotspur) | 9 |
| Kevin DE BRUYNE (Manchester City) | 9 |
| Emil FORSBERG (RB Leipzig) | 9 |
| Yannick FERREIRA CARRASCO (At Madrid) | 7 |
| Joshua KIMMICH (Bayern Munich) | 7 |
| Luka MODRIC (Real Madrid) | 7 |
| Radja NAINGGOLAN (Roma) | 7 |
| Bernardo SILVA (Monaco) | 7 |
| Angel DI MARIA (Paris Saint-Germain) | 5 |
| Adam LALLANA (Liverpool) | 5 |
| Steven N'ZONZI (Sevilla) | 5 |
| SON Heung-min (Tottenham Hotspur) | 5 |
| Naby KEITA (RB Leipzig) | 4 |
| Toni KROOS (Real Madrid) | 4 |
| Mesut OZIL (Arsenal) | 4 |
| Miralem PJANIC (Juventus) | 4 |
| Arjen ROBBEN (Bayern Munich) | 4 |
| SUSO (Milan) | 4 |
| Tiemoue BAKAYOKO (Monaco) | 3 |
| Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona) | 3 |
| Christian ERIKSEN (Tottenham Hotspur) | 3 |
| Blaise MATUIDI (Paris Saint-Germain) | 3 |
| Paul POGBA (Manchester United) | 3 |
| Adrien RABIOT (Paris Saint-Germain) | 3 |
| Marco VERRATTI (Paris Saint-Germain) | 3 |
| ARDA Turan (Barcelona) | 2 |
| Julian DRAXLER (Paris Saint-Germain) | 2 |
| FABINHO (Monaco) | 2 |
| FERNANDINHO (Manchester City) | 2 |
| Ilkay GUNDOGAN (Manchester City) | 2 |
| Marek HAMSIK (Napoli) | 2 |
| JOAO MARIO (Internazionale) | 2 |
| Stevan JOVETIC (Sevilla) | 2 |
| KOKE (Atletico Madrid) | 2 |
| Mateo KOVACIC (Real Madrid) | 2 |
| Manuel LOCATELLI (Milan) | 2 |
| Henrikh MKHITARYAN (Manchester United) | 2 |
| Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona) | 2 |
| Lars STINDL (Borussia Monchengladbach) | 2 |
| Julian WEIGL (Borussia Dortmund) | 2 |
| Georginio WIJNALDUM (Liverpool) | 2 |
| Felipe ANDERSON (Lazio) | 1 |
| Karim EL AHMADI (Feyenoord) | 1 |
| Michael CARRICK (Manchester United) | 1 |
| CASEMIRO (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| DANILO (Porto) | 1 |
| Cesc FABREGAS (Chelsea) | 1 |
| GABI (Atletico Madrid) | 1 |
| Jordan HENDERSON (Liverpool) | 1 |
| Vicente IBORRA (Sevilla) | 1 |
| Sami KHEDIRA (Juventus) | 1 |
| Gelson MARTINS (Sporting) | 1 |
| PIZZI (Benfica) | 1 |
| RAFINHA (Barcelona) | 1 |
| Marco REUS (Borussia Dortmund) | 1 |
| Franck RIBERY (Bayern Munich) | 1 |
| Mohamed SALAH (Roma) | 1 |
| Jean SERI (Nice) | 1 |
| Gylfi SIGURDSSON (Swansea City) | 1 |
| Tonny VILHENA (Feyenoord) | 1 |

### FORWARDS

| | |
|---|---|
| Lionel MESSI (Barcelona) | 24 |
| Edinson CAVANI (Paris Saint-Germain) | 21 |
| Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC (Manchester United) | 19 |
| Edin DZEKO (Roma) | 16 |
| Cristiano RONALDO (Real Madrid) | 13 |
| Diego COSTA (Chelsea) | 12 |
| Dries MERTENS (Napoli) | 12 |
| Gonzalo HIGUAIN (Juventus) | 11 |
| Alexis SANCHEZ (Arsenal) | 10 |
| Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Bayern Munich) | 9 |
| Anthony MODESTE (Cologne) | 8 |
| Radamel FALCAO (Monaco) | 7 |
| Paulo DYBALA (Juventus) | 6 |
| Mauro ICARDI (Internazionale) | 6 |
| Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona) | 6 |
| Antoine GRIEZMANN (Atletico Madrid) | 5 |
| Arkadiusz MILIK (Napoli) | 5 |
| Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City) | 4 |
| Pierre-Emerick AUBAMEYANG (B Dortmund) | 4 |
| Ousmane DEMBELE (Borussia Dortmund) | 3 |
| Theo WALCOTT (Arsenal) | 3 |
| Timo WERNER (RB Leipzig) | 3 |
| Mario BALOTELLI (Nice) | 2 |
| Bas DOST (Sporting) | 2 |
| Olivier GIROUD (Arsenal) | 2 |
| PEDRO (Chelsea) | 2 |
| Karim BENZEMA (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| Jose CALLEJON (Napoli) | 1 |
| Douglas COSTA (Bayern Munich) | 1 |
| Valere GERMAIN (Monaco) | 1 |
| Javier HERNANDEZ (Bayer Leverkusen) | 1 |
| Ciro IMMOBILE (Lazio) | 1 |
| Anthony MARTIAL (Manchester United) | 1 |
| Kylian MBAPPE (Monaco) | 1 |
| Alvaro MORATA (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| Konstantinos MITROGLU (Benfica) | 1 |
| NEYMAR (Barcelona) | 1 |
| Ivan PERISIC (Internazionale) | 1 |
| Wayne ROONEY (Manchester United) | 1 |
| Raheem STERLING (Manchester City) | 1 |

"He'd dribble and I'd score. He was the first legend of French football"

**Former France centre-forward Just Fontaine (left) pays homage to Raymond Kopa**

OBITUARIES

# Raymond Kopa (1931-2017)

For many French veterans, Raymond Kopa remains their greatest player of all time, no matter the succeeding claims of Michel Platini or Zinedine Zidane.

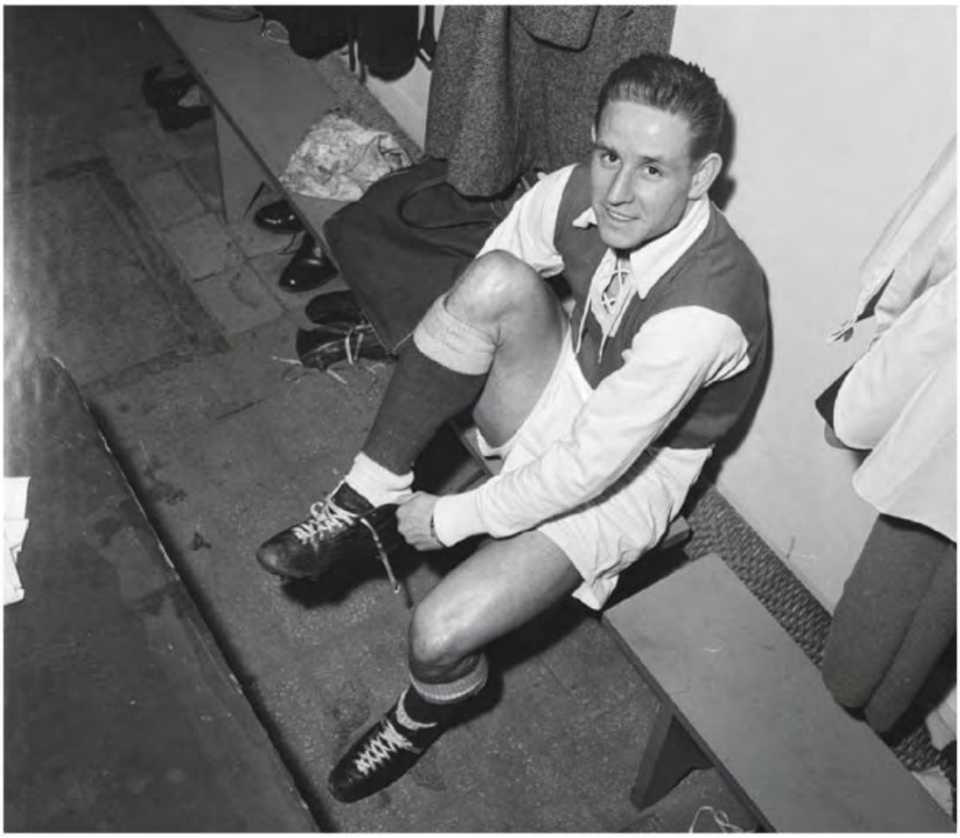
Born Kopaszewski, he scored 18 goals in 45 games for France but his footballing genius, fame and influence ran far beyond mere statistics.

Kopa was the creative centre-forward of a fine Reims side that finished runners-up to Real Madrid in the first European Champions Cup Final, in Paris in 1956. He then won the tournament three times with Madrid and would also lay on most of the record 13 goals for Just Fontaine as France finished third at the 1958 World Cup. That same year he was the first Frenchman to be voted European Footballer of the Year.

Kopa was the son of Polish immigrants who had travelled west between the wars in search of work in the mining industry in the north of France. He was born at Noeux-les-Mines, on October 13, 1931, and was saved from a career as a miner after finishing runner-up in a national young footballers' competition in 1949.

An added incentive to escape from the pits was the loss of a finger on his left hand in a mineshaft accident when he was only 15. And his footballing ambitions were assisted by the fact the family home was next door to the local club's ground – which was where he had spent most of his free time.

Kopa spent two outstanding seasons at Angers before joining Reims in 1951. Under the guidance of the coach Albert Batteux, he won two French championships as well as the 1953 Latin Cup, which was an end-of-season forerunner of the European Cup.



**Local hero...at Reims in 1955**

He then starred in the inaugural 1955-56 campaign of the new tournament which helped create Reims' "champagne football" aura and made Kopa an international transfer target.

Having already guested previously in games for Real Madrid, he agreed to join them before the 1956 European Final in the old Parc des Princes, where Reims led 2-0 and then 3-2 before ultimately losing 4-3 in a dramatic finale.

Kopa had scored 45 goals in 158 games for Reims and laid on many more, but there was never a chance that he would command the centre-forward role for Real. In Madrid, the team's iconic leader, both in spirit and number nine shirt, was Alfredo Di Stefano. This meant that Kopa applied his verve and skill in the more frustratingly restrictive role of outside-right as he and Madrid won the 1957, 1958 and 1959 Champions Cups.

Di Stefano would later comment: "The idea of [president] Santiago Bernabeu was that Kopa would play centre-forward and I would play inside-right or left. We tried it in training but it didn't work because I kept drifting into the centre..." Kopa was more gracious, acknowledging Di Stefano as "a phenomenon, perhaps the best footballer in all of history".

For many, Madrid's five-man 1958-59 forward line of Kopa, Argentinians Hector Rial and Di Stefano, plus Hungary's Ferenc Puskas and Spanish left-winger Francisco Gento is the greatest ever fielded by the club. Gento is now the only survivor.

In the 1959 Final, against his old club Reims, Kopa was reduced to the role of passenger for much of the game after a bad tackle by his French international colleague Jean Vincent. Kopa returned to Reims that summer and he and Vincent played together for several years but without ever apparently exchanging more words than was necessary.

The circumstances of Kopa's return

**Champion...winning the European Cup with Real Madrid in 1957**

"Hospitals should hire more nurses in nine months because there will be a lot of love made tonight"

**Barcelona's Gerard Pique after his side's incredible Champions League victory over Paris Saint-Germain**

were confused. He had played a number of games impressively at centre-forward for Madrid in the 1958-59 campaign when Di Stefano was injured and, five years younger than the Argentinian, appeared to be his likely successor.

But when Kopa reportedly demanded a pay rise, the club's autocratic president Bernabeu ordered he be shipped out. And knowing the player's family had been growing homesick, Reims were ready to bring him home.

Kopa returned as a hero. In 1958 he had shone in the French side that finished third at the World Cup in Sweden. Just Fontaine, his centre-forward successor and now team-mate back at Reims, scored a record 13 goals and owed most of them

For many, Madrid's 1958-59 forward line of Kopa, Hector Rial, Di Stefano, Ferenc Puskas and Francisco Gento is the greatest ever fielded by the club

to Kopa's creative perception.

Reims, however, rarely saw the partnership at its best. Fontaine twice broke a leg and Kopa was increasingly hampered by the injury legacy of that 1959 European Cup Final.

Kopa won the French league twice more with Reims before retiring, and along the way he also proved a thorn in the flesh of the football establishment.

His outspoken criticism of the retain-and-transfer system even earned him a six-month suspension at one point – which only enhanced the well-deserved respect in which the game held him.

*Keir Radnedge*

Photo: Offside/REX/Shutterstock

**Memories...Raymond Kopa**

**Heroic...Gemmell**

**TOMMY GEMMELL** (1943-2017)

As long as heroic moments of the European Champions Cup are recounted there will always be a very special place reserved for Tommy Gemmell.

His grab for glory came in the second half of the 1967 Final on a sunny afternoon in Lisbon's old Estadio Nacional. Rank outsiders Celtic, the first British club to reach the Final, were up against an Internazionale whose defensive discipline and ruthless counter-attacking had carried all before them in two of the previous three seasons.

True to form, Inter snatched the lead after only six minutes when Jim Craig tripped Renato Cappellini and Sandro Mazzola converted the penalty.

With nothing to lose, a green-and-white storm tide ultimately overwhelmed even Inter's flood barriers as Gemmell thrashed home a Craig cross from 25 yards and veteran centre-forward Steve Chalmers then deflected home the winner with eight minutes left.

That breakthrough strike from Gemmell was the pinnacle of a Celtic career in which he played 418 games and scored 63 goals. One of those goals came in the 1970 Champions Cup defeat by Feyenoord, making Gemmell one of only 18 players to have scored in two separate European finals.

His 18 appearances for Scotland included the famous 3-2 victory over world champions England at Wembley in 1967. Later, after a decade with Celtic in which he won six league titles, three Scottish Cups and four League Cups, he moved south to Nottingham Forest. He later returned to Scotland with Dundee, winning the 1973 Scottish League Cup against Celtic, before going on to manage Dundee and Albion Rovers.

Celtic chief executive Peter Lawwell led the tributes, saying: "Tommy was a true Celtic giant who gave the club so many years of his life in an illustrious career. He was a Celtic great, one of football's greats, a man of huge stature in the game and someone who made such an important mark on Celtic Football Club."

None more important than that strike for goal one sunny day in Libson.

**ALEX YOUNG** (1937-2017)

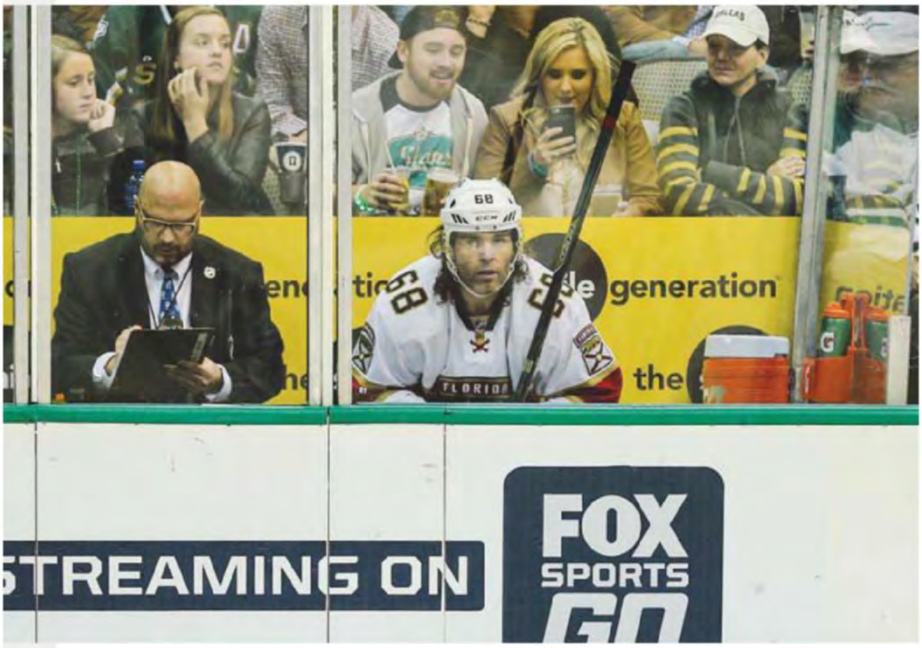
Nicknamed "The Golden Vision", he scored five goals in his eight appearances for Scotland and was a league winner both sides of the border: with Hearts, in 1958 and 1960, and Everton in 1963.

**Golden Vision...Alex Young (second from left)**

# Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

## IFAB strikes again




**Misguided...the "sin bin" works well in ice hockey but would lead to a more defensive approach in football**

I bring stunning news from IFAB – you know, The International Football Association Board, the self-appointed "Guardians of the Laws of the Game". They are getting ready to make a change to the shoot-out tie-breaker. Well, they're thinking about it.

Their interest in this matter stems, I've no doubt, from research done by two professors at the London School of Economics who demonstrated that, under the current system, the team taking the first kick gains a 60-40 advantage as likely winners. Which means that winning the toss is the most important part of the whole ridiculous procedure.

IFAB has now jumped on those stats and announced it will look into the matter. But the damning stats were published in 2010, so it's taken only seven years for IFAB to stir itself. Believe me, that's IFAB's version of ASAP.

Also on IFAB's current agenda is the contentious matter of sin bins. They keep coming up at IFAB gatherings, so someone somewhere must think they're a good idea.

Sin bins have already managed to insinuate themselves into youth football and they are now evidently on their way to appearing at the World Cup – which would be a shame, as they're not a particularly good idea for football. They work well enough in ice hockey, but there we're dealing with a small team – six skaters – in an area less than a quarter the size of a football pitch. In ice hockey, when a player is banished to the bin you get a "power play" from the opponents – an all-out attacking onslaught opposed by frantic defending – and, yes, it is exciting and you're likely to get goals.

But can you even imagine anything like that in football? A more likely response is that the short-handed team will react by "parking the bus" for the prescribed period. Do we need more encouragement for teams to bore us with constipated defensive tactics? If only there was a way of ensuring that attacking play gets rewarded more often than defensive dourness.

I'm wondering who it is that finds the sin bin scenario so appealing. My guess would be the coaches. We've heard from these guys before on the matter of rules and their interventions are rarely helpful. Their aim is not to create a more attractive game but rather to make their lives easier and allow them more control during the game.

In 2005 FIFA announced that coaches were clamouring for time-outs, so the idea was tried out – on the poor boys at the 2006 Under-17 World Cup. It was a disaster. Some coaches refused to use the proffered time-outs at all, while one or two thought it was a great idea – but only because these were kids and they needed instruction. My favourite time-out was called by Japan in a game against the USA. As the Japanese boys gathered for their instructions, the American boys wandered over to their bench to get a drink. Just one minute after the game restarted it was the Americans who scored.

Happily, time-outs have vanished, and the same thing happened with the notion that kick-ins would be better than throw-ins. That one, as I recall, was a favourite of Pele's. Again, it was the boys who suffered, this time in the 1993 Under-17 World Cup. Only the Japanese took the idea seriously and used a kick-in specialist. Annoyingly, he seemed always to be on the other side of the field whenever a likely kick-in situation arose. The delays as he trotted over to take the kick irritated everyone.

I do not recall any goals being scored following kick-ins and that idea disappeared too. As did an offside experiment used at the 1991 Under-17 World Cup. I remember that the 18-yard penalty-area line was extended to each touchline and there was no offside between the two 18-yard lines. When I asked coaches if they'd made tactical plans to exploit the new lines, their answer, almost to a man, was basically that they were ignoring it as the boys had played with the regular rules all their lives and would return to them in a week or so, so why confuse the poor lads?

> While there were some ideas that did not come from the coaches, most did – and that's not a good idea

So, while there were some ideas that did not come from the coaches, most did – and that's not a good idea. Rule changes are needed to clear up ambiguities. Beyond that, the main reasons for any change should be to make the sport safer to play, and to make it more enjoyable – both to play and to watch. WS

"His aim is to take Palermo into the Champions League. He's going to build the new stadium and training complex which is vital for the club's future"

**After getting through 58 coaches in 30 years as the Sicilian club's owner, Maurizio Zamparini (far right) sells up to ambitious US-Italian financier Paul Baccaglini**

# PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

## Appointments, sackings and loans

## IN

**Step up...Andries Jonker**

### EUROPE

**ZDENEK ZEMAN** replaced Massimo Oddo as coach of Pescara with the club bottom of Serie A, while Genoa appointed **ANDREA MANDORLINI** after sacking Ivan Juric in the wake of a 5-0 thrashing at Pescara – in Zeman's first game.

Wolfsburg named Arsenal academy boss **ANDRIES JONKER** as the replacement for Valerien Ismael, while **TAYFUN KORKUT** took over at Bayer Leverkusen.

Deportivo La Coruna appointed **PEPE MEL** to replace Gaizka Garitano, while **MICHEL** replaced Marcelo Romero at Malaga.

**PEDRO CAIXINHA** left Qatari club Al Gharafa to take charge of Scottish side Rangers.

Torpedo-BelAZ Zhodino coach **IGOR KRIUSHENKO** will combine the role with leading the Belarus national side.

**Opportunity...Igor Tudor**

Former Juventus and Croatia defender **IGOR TUDOR** left Karabukspor to take over at Turkish rivals Galatasaray.

### AFRICA

Ghana installed **MAXWELL KONADU** as caretaker coach until a permanent successor to Avram Grant is appointed. **ASHENAFI BEKELE** took charge of Ethiopia's national side.

German **ANTOINE HEY** was named coach of Rwanda's national team on a two-year deal, Frenchman **SEBASTIEN MIGNE** took charge of Congo and Angola appointed Brazil's **ROBERTO BIANCHI**.

Swedish coach **KJELL JONEVRET** was appointed boss of South African side Orlando Pirates.

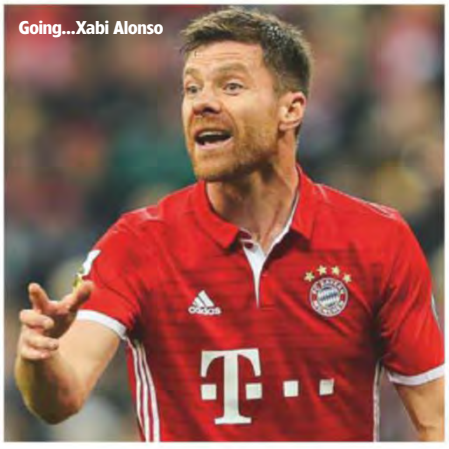
### ASIA

**CHRISTIAN BASSOGOG**, who was named player of the tournament when Cameroon won their fifth African Nations Cup in February, left AaB of Denmark and joined Chinese Super League side Henan Jianye.

Brazilian **LEONARDO VITORINO** was appointed coach of Cambodia.

### SOUTH AMERICA

Brazilian striker **LUIS FABIANO**, who scored 28 goals in 45 internationals and was a Copa America winner in 2004, joined Vasco da Gama from Chinese club Tianjin Quanjian.



**Going...Xabi Alonso**

### Alonso bows out

Bayern Munich midfielder **XABI ALONSO** will retire at the end of the season. The 35-year-old began his career with Real Sociedad and won the Champions League with Liverpool in 2005 and Real Madrid in 2014, before joining Bayern.

He was central to Spain's recent triumphs, winning the 2010 World Cup and the European Championship in 2008 and 2012. He won 114 caps and scored 16 goals.

**New venture... Marcelo Bielsa**

### Bielsa back in business

**MARCELO BIELSA** will coach Lille next season. The Ligue 1 strugglers appointed **FRANCK PASSI** as caretaker until the end of the current campaign following the departure of Patrick Collot.

Former Argentina coach Bielsa has been out of work since leaving Marseille in August 2015. He was announced as boss of Lazio in July 2016 but quit after just two days in charge.

## OUT

### EUROPE

After three seasons as coach of Barcelona, **LUIS ENRIQUE** will step down at the end of the current campaign.

In danger of becoming the first English champions to be relegated since 1938, Leicester City sacked manager **CLAUDIO RANIERI**.

**PAULO BENTO** was dismissed by Olympiakos despite the team being seven points clear at the top of the Greek Super League.

Scotland assistant manager **MARK MCGHEE** was sacked by Premiership side Motherwell.

### SOUTH AMERICA

**ROGERIO MICALE**, who led Brazil to Olympic gold in Rio last year, was sacked after his charges failed to qualify for the Under-20 World Cup finals.

**Responsible... Rogerio Micale**

## "I've never met a mafia boss. What I've read is false"

**Juventus president Andrea Agnelli denies claims by an Italian federation lawyer that directors of the Serie A champions distributed tickets to members of the 'Ndrangheta crime syndicate**

## Headliner

# "Oh, and another thing..."

### Luis Enrique announces he will leave Barcelona at the end of the season

Luis Enrique delivered the news as if it was nothing much, at the end of a routine press conference, after a routine victory, late on a Wednesday night.

He sat there and answered everything thrown at him, which for once didn't include a question about his future. And then, when the interviews were finished, he spoke about his future. A few minutes before, he had informed his players in the dressing room following their victory over Sporting Gijon. He was leaving Barcelona.

There was nothing about this that stood out, which is very much his way. The club president wasn't there, the players weren't there, and Enrique was not accompanied by his assistants. It was just him, the press officer Sergi Nogueras and the media, just like it always is after a game. The questions came and went, nothing remarkable, and then he looked sideways to confirm that he had been asked the last question. Nogueras nodded, so Enrique began.

"I won't be Barcelona coach next season," he said.

Looking up from their laptops, the journalists were caught out. It had been coming, just not yet, not now. Enrique had alerted the club in the summer that this might be his last, but while most expected him to leave – and there were plenty who desperately wanted him to – that conversation had not been made public. The club's president had insisted that there was no Plan B for the bench just days earlier. They said that conversations had been scheduled for April.

"We were left open-mouthed," admitted Barca midfielder Ivan Rakitic. He was the only player to talk – and there was no great rush to thank the coach, which was striking. The truth, bizarre though it may sound, is that few lamented the passing of a man who had won eight of 10 trophies since taking over in Catalonia.

He is a man who may yet win more, too. Enrique had been on the edge half way through his first season; by the end of it, Barcelona had won the treble. In the second season, they won the league and cup double. In his third and final season, Barcelona could still win the treble (or nothing at all, of course). Nothing has been relinquished yet. However, when the announcement was made, any thought of a treble looked to have been obliterated by a 4-0 defeat by Paris Saint-Germain at Parc des Princes.

The decision to go was based on the pressure in leading Barca, especially when you take it as seriously as he does. Pep Guardiola admitted that he had stayed too long and he had "only" been there for four years. Now, after three, Enrique would be going. "The reason I'm leaving is the way I live this profession," he said. "I get very few hours to disconnect; at the end of this season I need to rest."

> "The reason I'm leaving is the way I live this profession. I get very few hours to disconnect; at the end of this season I need to rest"

While some questioned the timing of the announcement, it was swiftly vindicated. The critics thought that it would undermine his authority, weakening his hold on the dressing room. It would also, they argued, open up the debate about his succession, creating an extra layer of pressure and taking the focus away from the field.

**Offer...Bilbao boss Ernesto Valverde**

That argument didn't entirely convince though – most of all because the succession question was already there. If anything, with his announcement, it was clarified. There would be one less candidate: him.

If the timing surprised and the manner too, this had long been assumed to be Enrique's final season. Questions about his future were recurrent, as was speculation about who could take over. Names were thrown about and other coaches found themselves asked how they felt about Barcelona.

When Sevilla and Athletic Bilbao faced each other it became less a game in its own right, more a rehearsal of the Barca job. The assistant coach to one supposed candidate suggested that Barcelona and Madrid should maybe start attending to their own problems, rather than looking to people at other clubs to solve them on their behalf. "Like we don't have

"After all that Claudio Ranieri has done for Leicester City, to sack him now is inexplicable, unforgivable and gut-wrenchingly sad"

**Gary Lineker laments his former club's actions**

**Unbelievable...Luis Enrique with Sergi Roberto, who scored the decisive goal against PSG**

**Candidate... Jorge Sampaoli**

enough to attend to ourselves," he said.

On the night that Sevilla were knocked out of the Champions League, Jorge Sampaoli was asked about his future. Some wondered if defeat had effected his chances of turning up at the Camp Nou – as if that was all that mattered at the time.

Sampaoli is one name being put forward; another is Bilbao boss Ernesto Valverde. The former is a popular and populist choice, but the latter feels like a better fit. While fans were asked who they wanted, the club's directors kept quiet about their own preferences. And who, people wondered, did Lionel Messi want?

It has been suggested that Valverde had missed the chance to take over twice before, but the truth is slightly different – he turned it down twice, having given his word to Athletic as honour and loyalty matter to him. Barcelona had accepted that and asked him not to tie himself down; at some stage the job would surely come up again. If that was not necessarily an agreement, it is an option to be evaluated, and with that moment might have now arrived.

Not everyone thought the moment to make the announcement was the right one, but it didn't take long to look like it might just have been perfect.

The following day Enrique admitted he felt "liberated". So, it seemed, did everyone else. Barcelona had been under pressure as the uncertainty over Messi's future lingered and criticism of how they played grew. The coach stood accused not just of losing to PSG but of losing faith, with one paper claiming he was "trampling" on Barca's identity. Some were convinced that a crisis was coming, or that it had already come in Paris. And then something shifted.

The night Enrique announced he was leaving, Barcelona went top of the table. And then came that wild, impossible comeback against PSG in the return leg.

"It is difficult to explain in words," said Enrique of the 6-1 Champions League victory. "This is a sport for crazy people, a unique sport. Any kid who was in the Camp Nou tonight will never forget this in their life. It was torrent of feelings. I don't cry – I would like to, but the tears don't come out – but I enjoyed this as much as the rest, as much as those who did cry.

"I would like to dedicate this to all Barcelona fans, but especially those that kept supporting us after the 4-0. We mourned on Valentine's Day and we were giving a good going-over [by the critics]. We had lost everything in Paris, but this wonderful sport is unique: it always gives you the chance for revenge."

He had it; and for a night at least he was celebrated. Some suggested that maybe, just maybe, Barcelona should try to convince him to stay. But no one was about to do that, and if they did he wasn't about to listen.

*Sid Lowe*

# Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

**Helpless...Arsene Wenger looks on as Arsenal are thrashed at Bayern Munich**

## What now for Arsenal and Wenger?

Is it time for Arsenal to commit themselves to what the late philosopher Hannah Arendt called "Creative Destruction"? As things stand, Arsene Wenger has clearly run his course, and might well have done so a couple of seasons ago.

Those two dreadful 5-1 defeats by Bayern Munich should surely have been a prelude to a final farewell, but whatever the clamour of dissident fans – whose banners inscribed "*Au Revoir*" (see you again) should read "*Adieu*" (goodbye) – surely they have an impeccable case.

Time and time again the team has gone out in the first knockout round of the European Cup. Years have gone by since the club won the league. Even the FA Cup is scarcely a consolation.

That Wenger has lost his way was surely apparent when his team met Liverpool at Anfield, when he started with Alexis Sanchez, far and away his outstanding attacker, on the bench, only and belatedly to bring him on at half-time.

Until very recently, Wenger's Arsenal teams had been built on an attractive pattern of attacking players. Yet in the first half at Liverpool, he reportedly told Petr Cech, his goalkeeper, to kick it long. A wreckless abandonment of his own strategic philosophy.

Alex Ferguson apart, no club manager in England has survived as long as Wenger. The problem has been that he has been in such total command at the club. The board of directors are no more than an obedient chorus and the club's major shareholder, Stan Kroenke, hardly a great connoisseur of the game, gives Wenger his support. That for some years the American was taking £3million a year out of the club for his "advice" still seems bewildering, to put it as euphemistically as possible.

Long ago, when Kroenke's name came into the frame, Peter Hill-Wood, the chairman, exclaimed that no one like Kroenke should be considered for such a role – only for Hill-Wood, alas, to have the humiliating task of flying to America to persuade Kroenke to accept the role.

> Wenger has clearly run his course, and might well have done so a couple of seasons ago

Who then should succeed Wenger and preside over the rebuilding of the team?

The name of the current Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri has been put forward and he seems eager to get the job. He has worked his way up steadily through the years, from C2 to Juventus, but has not worked outside of Italy.

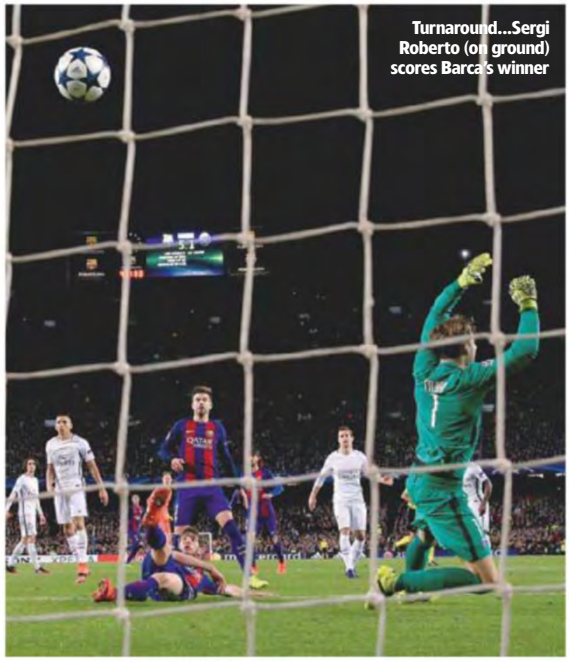
## Barcelona: astonishing, unpredictable and hilarious

Ultra commercialised as it is at the upper reaches, football's eternal appeal still lies in its sheer unpredictability. Cup giant-killers emerge, however briefly, but right at the top, there can be astonishing surprise. Which is what took place at the Nou Camp, where a Barcelona team which had collapsed away to Paris Saint-Germain, crashing 4-0 and appearing to be dead and buried, turned form and logic on their head and thrashed PSG in the return.

Yes, one of Barca's penalties was flagrantly a product of a dive, while PSG scored one fine goal but threw away two crucial chances. But when you have Neymar in glorious opportunist form, with Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez to support him, then the seemingly impossible becomes attainable.

Unai Emery, the PSG coach, may have had a point when he condemned the refereeing, but there was no denying the sheer quality of Barcelona's play.

Funny game, football? Surprising to the point of sheer hilarity.



Turnaround...Sergi Roberto (on ground) scores Barca's winner

## Millwall, the repeat offenders

"No one likes us, we don't care," sing the Millwall fans, and at White Hart Lane in the FA Cup, where Tottenham Hotspur thrashed them, even though the unfortunate Harry Kane dropped out so early and so worryingly, they did nothing to endear themselves.

Already Leicester City have made an official protest to the FA over the fans' behaviour and the generally offensive atmosphere they had to face in their cup tie at the New Den. At Tottenham, there was much more of the same, especially aimed at Tottenham's excellent Son Heung-min, who responded with a hat-trick.

To their credit, Millwall are keeping at bay a predatory council which wants to build all round their stadium. Bigotry and violence are, alas, rooted in the club's stormy history, which the Lions themselves, with the best will in the world, can do little or nothing to eliminate.

## Russian priorities are all wrong

A leading Russian official has praised the violence of their own thugs in France last summer and suggested that contests be held during the ensuing World Cup finals between hooligans from competing countries!

TV screened a whole programme showing such thugs in training. A source who knows about such things, tells me that when in France the Russian thugs met an English "firm" they were routed. The English, however, sought no publicity for fear – unlike the Russians – that their authorities would come down on them heavily.

> When in France the Russian thugs met an English "firm" they were routed

Thugs...Russians attack English fans

## Orient deserve better

In London, poor Leyton Orient are in severe financial trouble and their colossal debts, the fault of a feckless and sometimes violent Italian owner, could doom them to extinction.

I have so many memories of them, not least from 1957, when, one summer afternoon, I was phoned by their then chief scout Sid Hobbins. The former goalkeeper asked whether I could help their manager, Alec Stock, find a club in Italy, so I put it to that ever-volatile and exuberant Italian agent Gigi Peronace, who took John Charles to Juventus and was then visiting London.

I told him Stock could get a team fit and organise a defence, and Gigi took the matter to Roma, who somewhat to my surprise immediately expressed interest.

It then became a battle between two Jewish chairmen – or in the case of Roma, their president.

The two men could scarcely have been more different: Harry Zussman, an East End shoe manufacturer, small, rotund, forever smiling, greatly esteemed in the whole football community at Orient; and the large and pompous Renato Sacerdoti at Roma.

Stock went to Roma, but did not last long as an inveterate schemer on the club's board wanted him out. His chance came when, thanks to an interpreter, Stock missed the train taking the team to play in Naples and the directors picked the team in his absence. Arriving in Naples, he refused to sit on the bench and was promptly sacked.

In pre-war years, Clapton Orient, as they were before their move to Brisbane Road, were a font of extraordinary stories,

Orient boss...Alec Stock (far right)

told to me in later years by their Yorkshire-born attacker Ted Crawford.

There was the Christmas morning when the whole team turned up drunk at the station before a game at Brighton, to be greeted by their manager with a barrel of beer. Crawford told me that when he went up to head the ball, he saw two of them. They managed to draw.

Then there was the fan who treated the whole team to generous parties; till it transpired that he had stolen the money from his office and was jailed.

Arthur Rigby, the former England international, when drunk would see the ghost of Mother Shipton, a famous Northern witch. Once, just before kick-off, he turned up drunk at the ground and his colleagues shoved him under the shower.

Crawford told him to stay out on the left wing and he'd keep the ball away from him. When eventually he had to pass to him, Rigby ran on to the ball and scored – the first goal of an eventual hat-trick.

Read Brian Glanville's weekly online column at worldsoccer.com

# eye witness

Steve Menary reports

TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS

## TCI dream of more games

### Lack of fixtures hinders islanders' progress

"We don't spend any time looking at the FIFA rankings," admits Oliver Smith, who is the general secretary at the Turks & Caicos Islands Football Association (TCIFA). "The focus of the association is on grassroots and the youth."

That is just as well. The tiny chain of Caribbean islands has probably spent more time around the bottom of the FIFA rankings than any member of the world game. And while San Marino are also perennially lowly, at least they play eight to 10 World Cup or European Championship qualifiers every two years.

"We are low on the FIFA rankings not because we lost games but because we do not play any games," sighs striker Marco Fenelus, who plays professionally in Taiwan for Tatung.

The Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI) have managed just 18 full internationals since joining FIFA in 1998 and they last played a senior international two years ago.

> "We are low on the FIFA rankings not because we lost games but because we do not play any games"
>
> TCI striker Marco Fenelus

James Rene, who captained TCI in February's CONCACAF Beach Soccer Championship in the Bahamas, is 30 and has just six caps for the senior international side. The team's star player, Billy Forbes, plays professionally in the USA and made his debut a decade ago. Now 26, he has just eight caps.

From a distance, football in the tiny British Overseas Territory looks like another Caribbean sinkhole with FIFA money pouring in and little activity, but the story on the ground is very different.

Organised football began in the mid-1990s when former English referee Tom Smith set up a four-team league on the most populated island of Providenciales. After Jack Warner – who was then an aspiring regional football politician – paid a visit, the islands were ushered first into the Caribbean Football Union, then CONCACAF, and in 1998 into FIFA.

**Rare outing...TCI (left) take on Aruba**

However, decent pitches remain scarce and the league originally used one at a Club Med Resort. There is a national stadium, which is owned by the government and has also staged softball, but is it unusable for football according to Oliver Smith, who says emphatically: "We will never play there again."

TCI has only ever played three senior home internationals, and the last one in 2015 was at the TCIFA's Academy, with rented seats and an afternoon kick-off to make a TV broadcast possible.

The academy does have a good quality grass pitch, courtesy of help from the islands' golfing community, and lighting capable of staging league games every Tuesday and Saturday.

With live spectator sports in short supply, games are popular, particularly at weekends. Jamaican fans line up behind one goal, drinking rum with sound systems pounding out – which means matches must finish by 10pm due to complaints from neighbouring houses.

The TCIFA secured a FIFA Goal grant to put in permanent seating and new lights that are good enough for live TV at the academy, which already has a dormitory ▸

**Stretch...TCI goalkeeper Raymondson Azemard**

## Key figures in Turks & Caicos football

President... Sonia Bien-Aime

**SONIA BIEN-AIME**
The former captain of the islands' women's team is president of the TCIFA and a rising star in football politics. She is a member of the CONCACAF Executive Committee and has been on the FIFA Council since 2015.

**OLIVER SMITH**
A former lawyer on Wall Street in New York, he returned home to work as general secretary in the new TCIFA administration that took charge two years ago.

**DARREN "DAZ" MEEHAN**
A British expat who took over as technical director and national coach last year, when Craig Harrington moved to California.

**GIANNI ASCANI**
The islands' top referee, he was appointed to the FIFA list in 2015 and has officiated in the CONCACAF Champions League.

**BILLY FORBES**
The first player from the islands to win a soccer scholarship to the US, where he now plays professionally for San Antonio Scorpions in the USL.

and an artificial pitch.

Since FIFA president Gianni Infantino closed the Goal scheme, the TCIFA's cash now comes through its replacement, the Forward programme. No money has arrived yet, although news was expected from a FIFA briefing in Jamaica in March.

Finance is a constant issue, but the TCIFA runs programmes from under-sevens up to an academy side that plays in the senior Provo Premier League. Smith estimates there are 500 players of both sexes in these programmes, but as many as 300 of those are ineligible to play at international level.

Like so many leagues around the world, the league is dominated by overseas players, mostly Jamaicans and Haitians working in the tourism industry.

The largest resort, Beaches, fields a team in the Provo League, but with 1,800 employees it has so many players that a group have split off to form a different club

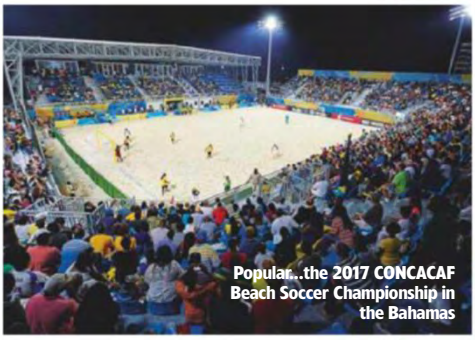
this season. Virtually all of these players are Haitian or Jamaican and unavailable to national coach Daz Meehan as they do not have "belonger' status", which is notoriously difficult to obtain.

"It's a long process even for kids who were born in the country with Haitian parents," says Forbes, who was born in TCI to a Haitian mother.

Getting belonger status took five years for Rene, who was born in Haiti and moved to TCI with his parents aged 10. He had to wait until he was 26 for his first cap and says: "I was at my prime, I was unstoppable; I could have had twice as many caps.

"There is a big fight over the politics. Eligibility is the main problem. The pool is so little. And some people don't want to come to training as they know they are not eligible for the team."

In 2012, the government tightened the residency rules, so now the only way to become a belonger is by birth, descent, adoption or after 10 years of marriage to a belonger.



Popular...the 2017 CONCACAF Beach Soccer Championship in the Bahamas

Immigration remains a constant and sometimes tragic problem. Last year, heavy fines and prison sentences were introduced for anyone harbouring illegal migrants. And in January, a wooden boat carrying Haitian migrants hit a reef and capsized off Providenciales killing at least a dozen people.

Yet without the Jamaican and Haitian migrants, both tourism and football would struggle to function.

The indigenous locals were traditionally more orientated to US sports such as basketball, with football initially relying on British expats to such a degree that when TCI took on Haiti in 2004 the squad was hardly reflective of a Caribbean island.

That is changing – and having a player in MLS certainly helped. Gavin Glinton, who was born on the islands but raised in the USA, only made 20 appearances for LA Galaxy but proved an inspiration to the likes of Forbes, who in 2009 became the first player from the islands to win a full US soccer scholarship.

Focus...TCIFA general secretary, Oliver Smith

"I got noticed in a World Cup qualifier when I was 16 and a guy from Canada saw me and I got to go to college," says Forbes, who studied at Lubbock Christian University in Texas and signed for NASL franchise San Antonio Scorpions after graduating.

After Scorpions folded in 2015, Forbes moved briefly to Rayo OKC due to its links with Spanish side Rayo Vallecano, but the NASL outfit also collapsed last year and Forbes returned to San Antonio's new USL franchise.

His dream is a contract in Europe but he remains committed to the national side and missed two USL fixtures last year to play in the beach soccer qualifiers, where he scored six goals in as many games.

"I know it's not in the FIFA window, but I made sure it was put in my contract that it could happen and I could play," says Forbes, who like the rest of the senior team wants more international games, the last of which was a 12-4 aggregate defeat by St Kitts & Nevis in the first round of World Cup qualifying.

"They had players that were full-time pros in England," says Rene. "We are not at that level yet. We are the underdogs. It's going to be like that for a long time until its developed. We need to send players overseas for experience."

Getting experience comes at a price:

Warm-up...local side Beaches

## TCIFA FIFA funding

| Year | Project | FIFA funding |
|---|---|---|
| 2001 | Academy | $438,000 |
| 2006 | Headquarters | $282,000 |
| 2010 | Pitch | $596,500 |
| 2011 | Academy extension | $499,992 |
| 2014 | Technical centre | $500,000 |
| Total | | $2,316,492 |

Source: FIFA

## Provo Premier League

Training...Academy

**ACADEMY**
The TCIFA academy team for players up to their late teens. League winners for the last three seasons.

**BEACHES**
A side made up of staff from the islands' biggest resort. Most players are Haitian or Jamaican. League winners in 2002 and 2007.

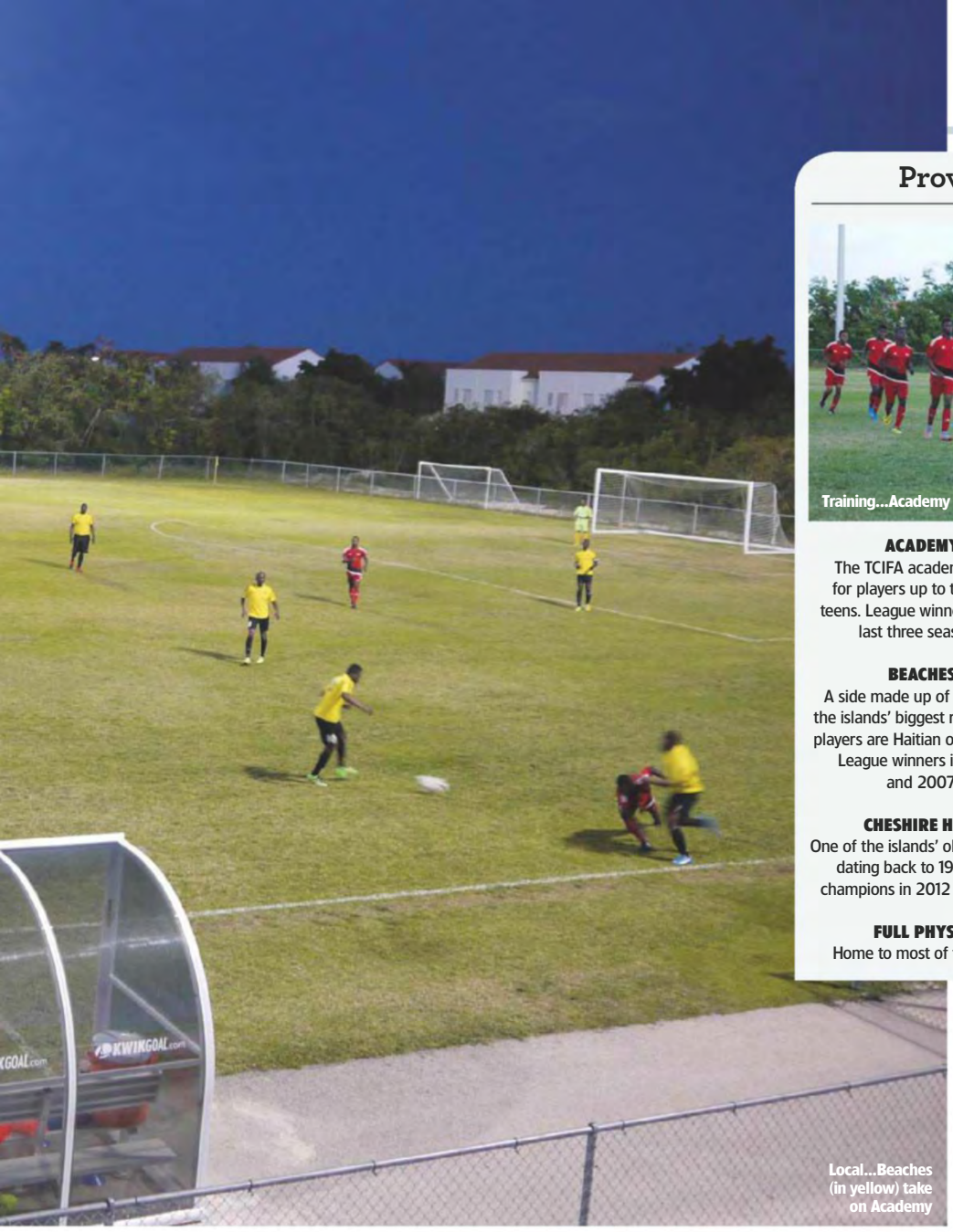
**CHESHIRE HALL**
One of the islands' oldest teams, dating back to 1999, and champions in 2012 and 2013.

**FULL PHYSIC**
Home to most of the local players who graduate from the TCIFA Academy.

**SWA SHARKS**
Founded in 1999, most of their players come from the British expat community.

**SMALL WORLD UNITED**
A new team formed by employees from the Beaches resort. Replaced Grand Turk United, who dropped out of the league in 2016 due to travel costs.

**TEACHERS**
Founded by the islands' teachers and still featuring many players from the education system.


Local...Beaches (in yellow) take on Academy

the TCIFA gets $250,000 a year from FIFA's Financial Assistance Programme (FAP) but playing a match overseas costs up to $30,000.

The TCIFA had to choose between entering the 2017 Caribbean Cup or sending a side to Trinidad & Tobago for the CONCACAF Under-20 qualifiers.

Youth triumphed again, although Rene got to take part as coach of a TCI side that lost 2-0 to St Lucia, 11-0 to the hosts and 5-0 to Guadeloupe.

Since then, the only international activity has been the beach soccer qualifiers, where the average age of the TCI squad was just 19.

This focus on youth helped Forbes – and more recently Fred Dorvil, now at Western Texas College, and Herby Magny, who is in his second year studying business at Providence University College in Canada. However, all these players need an outlet at international level.

"Before we didn't have many players that were eligible to play for the team based on the FIFA requirements and I believe it also had to do with funds," argues Magny.

"But with the amount of eligible and potential players that we have now, we are definitely not playing enough games."

The TCIFA recognises this and wants to play more senior friendlies. Meehan has established a WhatsApp group with other coaches in the region and Belize wanted a game but were deterred by the cost.

Youth...Shrimps and Warriors beach teams

With CONCACAF promising to help smaller member associations financially, TCI might soon manage only their second ever friendly international, with Barbados keen to play.

"If they had more games, I would go back," says Rene, who is studying hotel management at the University of East London. "It depends if the TCIFA want it.

"You can get cheap flights if you get the right connections. Only Marco in Taiwan would be a problem.

"The experience would be so much better. At home, playing against each other it's the same players and sometimes you don't even want to go for the tackle because you know the player."

Fenelus is equally frustrated and says: "I believe FIFA need to involve us more in the sport. If we do not play games, how do they expect Turks and Caicos Islands to improve?"

Longer term help is needed from FIFA and that could soon happen courtesy of the World Cup expanding to 48 teams from 2026. Wherever the finals are, the TCI won't be there, but the expansion will generate the funds for Infantino to fulfil a pre-election pledge of providing every member with $5million every four years.

At present, the TCIFA get $1m every four years through FAP and such a massive pay-rise could transform football at all levels in this tiny group of islands. WS

# BAYERN'S WAR

**WORDS:** Nick Bidwell

*THE ALL-ACTION CHILEAN WHO HAS FOUGHT HIS WAY TO SUCCESS WITH CLUB AND COUNTRY*

In a fantasy XI of football gladiators, Bayern Munich and Chile box-to-box midfielder Arturo Vidal would be the first name on the team sheet. Dynamic, fearless, aggressive and maniacally devoted to winning, "*Rey Arturo*" (King Arthur) is the archetypal conquistador. Never shirking, never wavering, he is a Tasmanian Devil in sports kit.

"Arturo is our warrior," declared keeper Gianluigi Buffon when he was a team-mate of the Chilean at Juventus. "Should I have to go to war, I'd like to have him at my side."

Instantly recognisable by his mohawk haircut and heavily tattooed body, the 29-year-old has always stood out from the crowd. Growing up in the Chilean capital of Santiago, his flair for the game was evident from an early age, and throughout his career he has cut an omnipresent figure; the all-action combatant who sets the tone and steals the show.

Once seen, he is rarely forgotten. Just ask Claudio Borghi, his first professional coach at Santiago side Colo-Colo, who are the biggest, most prestigious club in Chile.

Early in 2006, not long after taking charge of Colo-Colo, Borghi was watching the youth team, ostensibly to have a close

# MIDFIELD PIOR

look at a highly-rated young striker. Within minutes he had a totally different focus as a 17-year-old Vidal dominated midfield. By the end of the game, Borghi's mind was made up and the teenager was in the first-team squad.

It was quite a turnaround for the youngster. Prior to Borghi's arrival at Colo-Colo, many of the club's decision-makers were unconvinced by Vidal, finding him a

little too wayward and raw. Borghi, though, begged to differ. Flaws, what flaws? All the coach could see was a rich seam of potential to mine.

"Some described him as a wild kid, but I was more interested in his extraordinary desire and physicality," says Borghi, who was in the Argentina squad that won the World Cup in 1986.

"I think that was always in him, long before he turned professional. I knew he could help us, and to keep him in check I made sure to surround him with players of experience. I usually preferred to use him as stopper or libero. I'm not saying he wasn't good in midfield, but for me he was, above all, a great defender."

Borghi's decision to put his faith in Vidal paid off handsomely as the youngster slowly carved a niche for himself with the pros and played a key role in a bumper crop of achievements: a hat-trick of national titles (the Apertura and Clausura championships in 2006, and the Apertura the following year), as well as the runners-up spot in the 2006 Sudamericana Cup.

That attack-conscious Colo-Colo side is widely regarded as one of the best the club has ever produced and besides the ebullient Vidal it also featured such future headliners as young striker Alexis Sanchez, brilliant schemer Matias Fernandez (who is currently on loan at Milan) and keeper Claudio Bravo.

With his star firmly in the ascendancy, Vidal's name began to increasingly appear on overseas scouting reports, and in July 2007 he packed his bags for Germany after being bought by Bayer Leverkusen in a €5.2million deal. A fan of Real Madrid, he would probably have chosen Spain as his first European port of entry, but in the end he was won over by the sweet-talkers from the Rhineland.

Much of the spadework for his signing was done by Leverkusen scout Jonas Boldt, the son of a Lufthansa executive who, thanks to family connections, had worked for the club since his schooldays. Based in Buenos Aires, Boldt first spotted Vidal in January 2007, at the South American Under 20 Championship in Paraguay, and fired off a glowing appraisal to his superiors.

Initially, the Leverkusen top brass were reluctant to follow it up, mindful that their most pressing needs were for a left-back and a centre-forward. Boldt, however, was nothing if not persistent and he finally managed to persuade the club's director of sport Rudi Voller to travel to Chile and see for himself.

"Everyone who was at those South American Under-20 championships was aware Vidal was an outstanding defensive midfielder," remembers Boldt, who these days is Leverkusen's general manager.

"The thing was, we were looking for a pure left-back. Even so, I continued to keep an eye on him. He was a player you had fun watching.

"A while later, it came to my attention that he had been playing [for Colo-Colo] on the left side of a three or four-man defence. Although he didn't have unbelievable speed, he had remarkable passion, was strong and combative and could play too. I must have seen him 10 to 15 times in the flesh. He always stood out."

Vidal made his debut for Leverkusen in August 2007, against Hamburg, although he will not want to be reminded how badly it went. Lining up at left-back, he sank without trace, run ragged by Dutch winger Romeo Castelen. He gave away a penalty, which was the only goal of the game, and was a disaster from start to finish, with *Kicker* magazine awarding him the lowest possible mark in their player ratings.

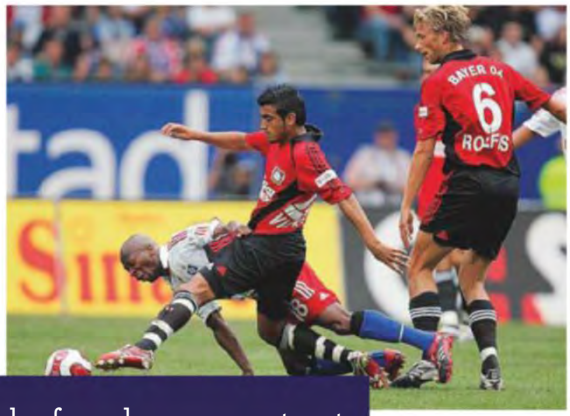
For Leverkusen coach Michael Skibbe the conclusions were obvious: Vidal was no man-marking full-back and would be far better employed in central midfield, either in a deep holding role or pushed further forward. And as soon as the Chilean was redeployed in the engine room he began to find his feet. For the next four seasons at the BayArena he would improve year on year, culminating in a brilliant 2010-11 campaign, in which he scored 10 goals in the Bundesliga and made another nine, many of them originating from his fine dead-ball delivery.

Vidal has always been a versatile player. At his first junior club, Rodelindo Roman, he played in all manner of positions – from central defence to wing-back and midfield enforcer to number 10 – and in his 10-year senior international career he has sparkled in many different roles. In his early days for Chile, under inimitable coach Marcelo Bielsa, he would often play at left-wing-back. After his former Colo-Colo boss Borghi took over in 2011 he was mainly used as a libero. Borghi's successor Jorge Sampaoli, meanwhile, made him his flexible friend.

In Chile's Copa America triumph of 2015 – their first-ever South American title – Sampaoli exploited every last drop of Vidal's versatility; one moment playing as a "nine-and-a-half" on the shoulder of the lone striker, the next leading the high press or dropping back to protect the Chilean rearguard. Left or right, back and forth, he was the thread which held it all together. Goalscorer, creator, lead wolf.

"Messi is incomparable. There's only one Messi," says Sampaoli. "On the other hand, Vidal could be called the Messi of midfielders. Players like him are not to be found on every street corner. He can do it all: win the ball, pass, dribble, score. He's everywhere on the pitch and does everything very well indeed."

Whether at Leverkusen or more recently Bayern Munich – who bought him for €37m from Juventus in the summer of 2015 – the German game has undoubtedly been good to Vidal. Receiving




**Terrible...Hamburg's Romeo Castelen (in white) made it a Leverkusen debut to forget for Vidal**

> "Players like him are not to be found on every street corner. He can do it all: win the ball, pass, dribble, score. He's everywhere on the pitch and does everything very well indeed"
>
> **Jorge Sampaoli on Vidal**

**Champion...Bayern celebrate last season's title success**

## Timeline

**JUN 27, 2006**
Makes his first-team debut for Colo-Colo in the opening leg of the Chilean Apertura Final, in a 2-1 win away to Universidad de Chile.

**DEC 12, 2006**
On the losing side in the Sudamericana Cup Final as Colo-Colo are beaten 2-1 at home by Pachuca of Mexico and lose 3-2 on aggregate.

**FEB 7, 2007**
Makes his senior debut for Chile, replacing Humberto Suazo in the 90th minute of a 1-0 win against Venezuela in Maracaibo.

**JUN 16, 2007**
Makes his last appearance for Colo-Colo and helps the team to retain the Apertura title with a 1-0 victory at home to Palestino.

**JUL 22, 2007**
Scores twice in the Under-20 World Cup finals as Chile beat Austria 1-0 to finish third in the tournament, which is held in Canada.

**AUG 19, 2007**
After signing for Bayer Leverkusen he makes his Bundesliga debut in a 1-0 defeat away at Hamburg.

**MAY 30, 2009**
Helps Leverkusen to the German Cup Final, where they are beaten 1-0 by Werder Bremen.

**Admirer...Antonio Conte is a big fan**

a relatively pressure-free initiation to European football at Leverkusen, he has worked with some of the world's top coaches – Jupp Heynckes at Leverkusen, Pep Guardiola and Carlo Ancelotti at Bayern Munich – and won a league-and-cup double with Bayern last term. But he owes an equal debt of gratitude to the Italian scene, where from 2011 to 2015 he took his game to new heights at Juventus, revelling in added responsibilities and learning greatly on the tactical front.

A Serie A champion in each of his four seasons with Juve and a Champions League runner-up in 2015, he was a relentless hunter of the ball, expertly shutting down opposition passing lanes, forever driving forward and outstanding in his range of pass and finishing ability. He was perpetual motion and insatiable hunger, Chilean style. "He does enough running for four men," recalls former team-mate Claudio Marchisio.

It is little wonder that current Chelsea manager Antonio Conte is reported to be keen on luring him to Stamford Bridge. For three years at Juventus, Vidal was the man who brought Conte's famous 3-5-2 formation to life. Bought for just €12.5m from Leverkusen, he embodies the Conte philosophy of high-tempo, work ethic, endurance and sound technique.

"He's an amazing player, though I have to admit that I found it hard at first to fit him into my Juve team," Conte said in an interview with *El Pais* last year. "My instinct was to use a 4-2-4 and 4-4-2, but on seeing the intensity of Vidal getting up and down the pitch, I switched to a 4-3-3 and later a 3-5-2.

"Technically and physically he is exceptional. I'd always have him in one of my teams."

Few and far between are the top European sides who would not be willing to break the bank for Vidal's unique brand of all-terrain pre-eminence. But he can be a most difficult customer too: hot-headed, ill-disciplined and boasting a subscription to scandal.

Following a semi-final loss to Argentina at the 2007 World Under-20 finals in Canada, he was one of several Chilean players involved in a brawl with police outside the Toronto stadium. In 2011, he and four other players were handed substantial international bans for returning to the national-team camp late and drunk after an evening off. Two years later, he was in trouble again, a video finding its way onto social media apparently showing him and Chile team-mate Gary Medel under the influence of alcohol during camp.

To make matters worse, he never seemed to learn his lesson, and slap bang in the middle of the 2015 Copa America, he crossed the line once more, crashing his Ferrari on the outskirts of Santiago. Arrested for drink-driving, he was also guilty of aiming a few choice words at the cops: "Go ahead and handcuff me, but you'll be shitting on the entire country."

Photo: Xinhua News Agency/REX/Shutterstock

**Trouble...his crashed Ferrari in 2015**

He could easily could have been kicked off the team, and many thought that he deserved to be, but ultimately he was too big, too influential for coach Sampaoli to sacrifice. The slate was wiped clean with a tearful, public apology and he played his vital part in Chile's tournament success.

"What happened to Vidal reminded me of Maradona in 1994 [when he failed a drug test at the World Cup]," Sampaoli would explain to Argentinian radio

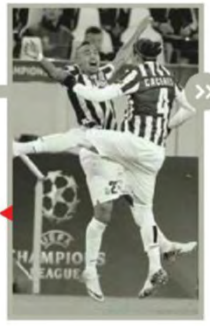
**SEP 5, 2009**
Scores his first international goal as Chile draw 2-2 with Venezuela in a World Cup qualifier.

**MAY 14, 2011**
Leverkusen win 1-0 at Freiburg and finish Bundesliga runners-up in what is his last game for the club.

**SEP 11, 2011**
Scores on his debut for Juventus just five minutes after appearing as a sub in a 4-1 opening-day win at home to Parma.

**MAY 6, 2012**
Juventus win 2-0 away to Cagliari to secure the Serie A title as closest rivals Milan are beaten 4-2 by Internazionale.

**NOV 27, 2013**
Scores the first hat-trick of his career as Juventus beat Copenhagen 3-1 in the Champions League group stage.



station, Radio Guemes. "With Diego no longer there, Argentina crumbled."

Nor has Vidal been served well by his outspokenness. During his days at Colo-Colo, he famously dubbed Universidad de Chile striker Mauricio Pinilla a "clown". And Chile Under-20s coach Jose Sulantay was not at all pleased when he demanded, in vain, to be made captain. Five years ago, he stirred up no end of controversy by claiming Universidad de Chile keeper Johnny Herrera was not good enough to play for the national side.

"Yes, he can be a rascal, a big boy," admits his former Leverkusen boss Heynckes. "However, I didn't find it difficult to handle him. You had to give him clear orders. To curb his extreme commitment."

Not that the recurrent negative headlines have affected his popularity in his homeland. As one of the key men in Chile's footballing renaissance of recent years – South American titles in 2015 and 2016, and solid World Cup performances in 2010 and 2014 – Vidal is nothing less than an icon, a living, breathing against-the-odds success story. The street kid from the slums, who through sheer force of will made it to the very top.

His early life in the working class San Joaquin district of Santiago could not have been any harder. His father, Erasmo, slipped into alcoholism and was eventually thrown out of the family home for setting light to a bed. Despite his mother, Jacqueline, working all the hours she could as a cleaner, just putting food on the table was a constant struggle, and in order to keep warm at night Arturo and his five younger brothers would sleep huddled together in one room.

Still only an adolescent, he effectively became the man of the house. Expected to both take care of his siblings and to bring some money into the house, at the age of nine he could be found cleaning out stables at a local horse-racing track.

Football, though, would be his escape route and, as luck would have it, there was a dusty, gravel pitch only a few steps from his front door. Instinctively the youngster gravitated towards it and he would soon be playing there morning, noon and night.

"He grew up with a ball," remembers his uncle, Victor Hugo. "It was part of him, he wouldn't be separated from it. He slept with it, he woke up with it. He'd play before he went to school, when he came home for lunch and after school."

Besides developing his technique with either foot, he also began to display his signature style: that of the feisty slugger. In the green-and-white of his schoolboy club Rodelindo Roman, no one fought harder for the cause and invariably he would leave the pitch covered in dirt, a natural consequence of launching himself into challenges on the grass-less surface. Team-mates, of course, loved him for it, affectionately calling him "*Cometierra*" (the dust eater).

Shortly after helping Rodelindo's under-12 side to win the Santiago metropolitan title, he got his first big break when another of his uncles took advantage of a contact at Colo-Colo – he was the mechanic of former player Raul Toro – to arrange for Arturo to have a trial at the club. He was duly taken on, and with the wind now in his sails he would let nothing stand in his way.

Never mind that he did not have the money for the bus fare to the training ground; he would run the three kilometre journey there and back. Too bad that schoolboy training only took place twice a week; he would still go every day, happy to run laps of the field in the absence of an organised session.

Whenever an obstacle emerged, such as when some began to argue he was too thin, Vidal set about proving them wrong. He simply would not be denied, and in youth coach Hugo Gonzalez he found the perfect sponsor, someone imbued with the unshakeable belief that the youngster was bound for glory.

Vidal and Gonzalez remain close, as do Vidal and his mother. "She was the one who gave me the strength to make something of myself," says the 86-times capped Chilean. "I saw what she had to go through for our family.

"She never stopped working. As soon as I realised I could make the grade as a professional, I threw everything I had at the task. I had to succeed to get the family out of its predicament. Maybe that's where I've got my fighting spirit from. But let's not exaggerate. The real warrior in my family isn't me. It's my mother." WS

**Beginnings...during his formative days with Colo-Colo**

> "Technically and physically he is exceptional. I'd always have him in one of my teams"
>
> **Antonio Conte**

Photo: Action Press/REX/Shutterstock

**Cheers...a traditional Bayern celebration**

**Honour...Chile's president Michelle Bachelet with the Copa America in 2015**

**MAY 2, 2015**
Scores the only goal of the game in a 1-0 win away to Sampdoria that secures Juventus' fourth consecutive Serie A title.

**JUN 6, 2015**
After adding the Italian Cup to their league title, Juventus are beaten 3-1 by Barcelona in the Champions League Final.

**JUL 4, 2015**
A first international honour as Chile win the Copa America on home soil, beating Argentina 4-1 on penalties after a 0-0 draw in the Final.

**AUG 1, 2015**
Four days after signing, he makes his Bayern Munich debut in the German Super Cup, but they lose on penalties to Wolfsburg after a 1-1 draw.

**MAY 21, 2016**
Plays in a goalless draw in the German Cup Final as Bayern complete the double by beating Borussia Dortmund on penalties.

**JUN 26, 2016**
Claims a second Copa America title as Chile win the centenary tournament in the USA, once again beating Argentina on penalties in the Final.

# Arturo Vidal

## the numbers game

### TRANSFER FEES

€5.2m — Colo-Colo to Bayer Leverkusen (July 07)

€12.5m — Bayer Leverkusen to Juventus (July 2011)

€37m — Juventus to Bayern Munich (July 2015)

**£230,000**

Cost of the Ferrari he crashed in June 2015 after visiting a casino during the Copa America

### CHILE

**86** CAPS

**20** GOALS

(as of 13.03.17)

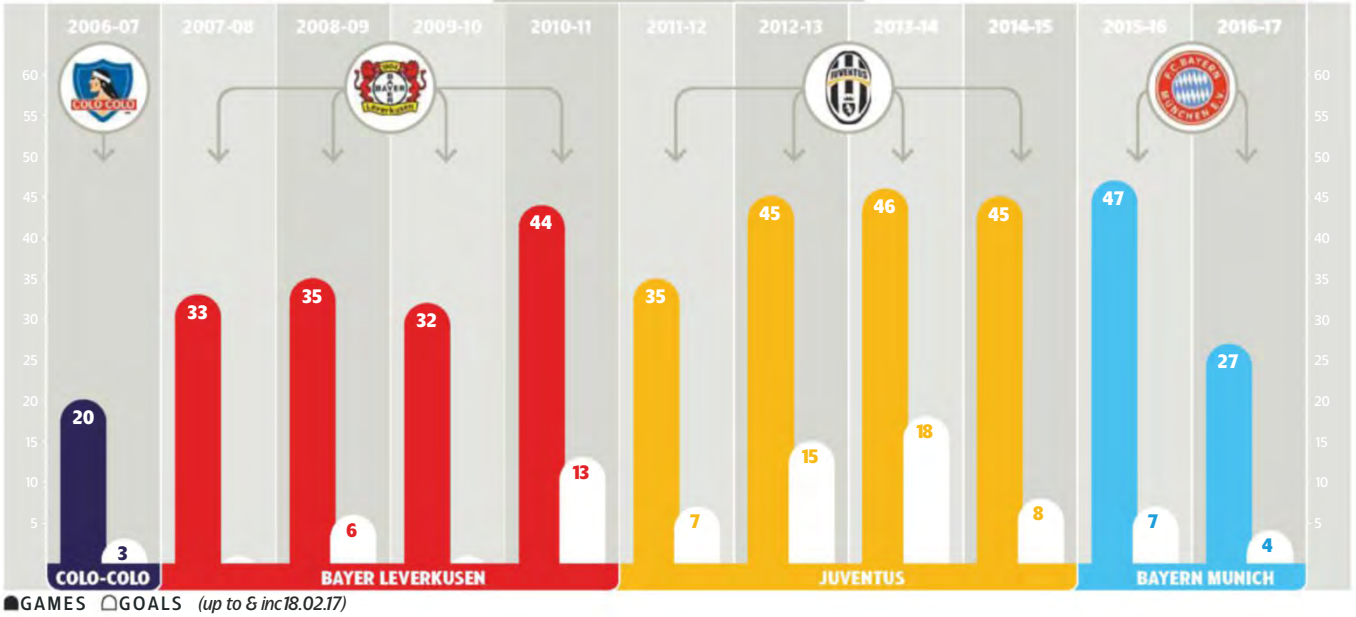
### CHILE'S MOST-CAPPED PLAYERS

### TOP BUNDESLIGA TRANSFERS

- €43m : JULIAN DRAXLER (Schalke to Wolfsburg, 2015)
- €40m : JAVI MARTINEZ (Athletic Bilbao to Bayern Munich, 2012)
- €37m : ARTURO VIDAL (Juventus to Bayern Munich, 2015)
- €37m : MARIO GOTZE (B Dortmund to Bayern Munich, 2013)
- €35m : MATS HUMMELS (B Dortmund to Bayern Munich, 2016)

### HONOURS

- 2006 Chilean Apertura, Chilean Clausura
- 2007 Chilean Apertura
- 2012 Serie A, Italian Super Cup
- 2014 Serie A
- 2015 Copa America, Serie A, Italian Cup
- 2013 Serie A, Italian Super Cup
- 2016 Copa America, Bundesliga, German Cup, German Super Cup




GAMES GOALS *(up to & inc 18.02.17)*

UNIQUE
FOREVER
Fertilizer !

WORDS: Howard Johnson

# Young, gifted and back at the top

## Russian cash and coach Jardim are behind Monaco's revival

It's now just over five years since the extraordinarily wealthy Russian businessman Dmitry Rybolovlev purchased his 66.6 per cent stake in AS Monaco. However, the fortunes of the Principality club have changed so much in that time that it surely feels more like 10 or even 20.

When Rybolovlev first took control in December of 2011, Monaco were in a desperate state. Languishing at the bottom of the French second division following relegation from Ligue 1 the previous season, many football followers found it hard to understand why the Russian would want to be involved with the club, given the state they were in.

What's more, despite reaching the Final of the Champions League in 2004, when they suffered a heavy 3-0 defeat to Jose Mourinho's Porto in Germany, Monaco had no real European pedigree to match the likes of Barcelona and Juventus, and no sizeable fanbase. It seemed logical ➤

Home...Monaco v Marseille at Stade Louis II in November

to assume that Rybolovlev's interest was based more around Monaco's location and its potential for smoothing easy access to the influential and wealthy elite of Europe who have habitually gathered locally.

In 2017 the benefits of being installed at the epicentre of the continent's wealth are no less obvious than when Rybolovlev first arrived. But whatever the 50-year-old's ulterior motives may or may not be, what can't be denied is that he has completely transformed Monaco's fortunes as a football club.

Under the astute stewardship of Portuguese coach Leonardo Jardim, Monaco are in with a real chance of winning their first top-flight title since 2000, when they were led by Claude Puel, who is now manager of Southampton.

Rybolovlev first brought Jardim on board as a replacement for Claudio Ranieri, in May 2014, in a move that many thought was certifiably insane.

Having taken the club up from Ligue 2 in style in 2013, the Italian had finished the 2013-14 Ligue 1 campaign in second place, behind Laurent Blanc's Paris Saint-Germain. Monaco had notched up an impressive 80 points and qualified for the Champions League – but that wasn't enough for Rybolovlev, who moved swiftly to bring in Jardim, a 40-year-old who'd just spent a year in Lisbon at Sporting.

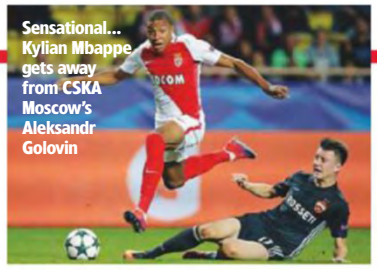
> "Wins are earned through a great collective attitude, for certain, but I recognise that we might have problems later on this season because we don't have two players for every position and we're fighting on four fronts"
>
> **Monaco coach Leonardo Jardim**

Despite a shaky start, Jardim led the side to a third-place finish in his first season in charge and repeated the feat last term. But what has been most impressive about the coach has been the way he's managed to transform the club's playing style. Not only is this the European outfit with the richest potential right now but it is also one of the easiest on the eye.

Rybolovlev is one of the world's richest men, with an estimated personal fortune of $7.7billion (recently dented by a messy divorce). So it's hardly surprising that on his arrival he was able to attract a much better quality of player than the club's status truly merited.

In the summer of 2013, when Monaco had just returned to Ligue 1, the club splashed out an astonishing €166million to bring on board top-level talent that included Joao Moutinho, James Rodriguez and Radamel Falcao, all clients of Portuguese agent Jorge Mendes. Given that the initial outlay would hardly have made a dent in Rybolovlev's bank account, it was assumed that this would be just the opening salvo in a financial arms race – first with big-spending, Qatari-backed PSG to dominate France, then with the major clubs of Europe. But what actually happened was very different.

First, the highly respected Ranieri was moved on in favour of Jardim and, within weeks of the new boss' arrival, Rodriguez was sold to Real Madrid. Then, with the 2014-15 season barely under way, Falcao was shipped out to Manchester United on loan. As a policy statement this was huge: Jardim was showing his intent to build his



**Sensational... Kylian Mbappe gets away from CSKA Moscow's Aleksandr Golovin**

**Derby... Jemerson (left) and Kamil Glik deal with Alassane Plea of Nice**

**Triumph...Monaco celebrate beating Tottenham Hotspur in this season's Champions League**

own team rather than buying one at top-of-the-market prices.

Yet more than this, the coach was also keen to give youth its chance and develop a Monaco that would be fit for the future, not just the present.

It's not easy to give youngsters their head when the pressure for immediate results is omnipresent, but Jardim has proved to be nothing less than phenomenal in that department.

Under him the club's player policy has evolved. Now Monaco are prepared to pay good – but not extravagant – money to recruit the best young talent out there, happy to back their own judgment in the knowledge that it's a win-win. On the one hand, they get top-class players; on the other hand, if things go well, the resale value is appealingly high.

**Rejuvenated... Radamel Falcao**

Brazilian defensive midfielder Fabinho, for example, joined the club in 2013 at the age of 19, while midfielder Tiemoue Bakayoko, also aged 19, arrived from Rennes in July 2014 for €8m. Another 19-year-old, attacking midfielder Thomas Lemar was signed from Caen for €4m in 2015 and left-back Benjamin Mendy was just 21 when he arrived from Marseille in the summer of 2016. Fellow full-back Djibril Sidibe left Lille for Monaco at the same time at the age of 23. All of these players have been big successes, proving that Jardim and his recruitment team are wily operators.

But it's not just in the transfer market that the Portuguese has earned his stripes, and the explosive impact this season of 18-year-old striker Kylian Mbappe proves that. Despite being born in Paris, Mbappe was recruited by Monaco's academy in 2013 and Jardim gave him his first taste of first-team action at the tail-end of 2015. This season Mbappe's been nothing short of sensational, scoring 11 goals and providing five assists in his first 24 matches.

After masterminding such impressive progress from such a young side, Jardim has surely made Europe's top clubs sit up and take notice of his coaching abilities. But it's not just that Monaco get results; they're also a joy to watch as they score goals for fun. After the first 25 league games of this season, Monaco had scored an incredible 75 goals – a staggering 25 more than their nearest rivals PSG. And while everyone is contributing to the tally – Valere Germain, Guido Carrillo, Lemar and Mbappe should all be mentioned in dispatches – it is Falcao who is making the headlines.

**Keeper...Danijel Subasic in action against Lorient**

After a thoroughly wretched two-year loan spell in England, where the Colombian failed to make any impression at either Manchester United or Chelsea, Falcao returned to his parent club in the summer of 2016 with many wondering whether he would ever again be the rapier-like finisher that he'd been with Porto, Atletico Madrid and during his first spell at Monaco.

The ligament damage he suffered during a French Cup match against Chasselay in January 2014 that put him out of action for six months seemed to have robbed him of those all-important lightning reactions in the box. But all those who thought Falcao was washed up have been forced to eat their words this season.

In his first 26 games the 31-year-old notched up a hugely impressive 22 goals and four assists. He appears to have regained the appetite for the game that had all but deserted him and is once again being spoken of as one of Europe's striking

elite. Those who claim Ligue 1 isn't as demanding as the Premier League would do well to note that Falcao has scored four of his goals in five Champions League matches this campaign.

While he is clearly delighted to have a finisher of Falcao's quality at the top of his game, Jardim is always quick to highlight the importance of chemistry and overall team spirit. "Wins are earned through a great collective attitude, for certain," he says. "But I recognise that we might have problems later on this season because we don't have two players for every position and we're fighting on four fronts: Ligue 1, Champions League, League Cup and French Cup.

Final...Monaco's Akis Zikos and Derlei of Porto

"The players are tired, that's for sure. But we're working hard to manage that so that players can recuperate well and yes, play well, even when they're tired."

Monaco have already reached the Final of the French League Cup where they'll meet PSG in Lyon on April 1, and Jardim will surely be going all out to deliver the club's first major trophy since they won the League Cup in 2003. That side boasted some outstanding performers including David Trezeguet, Marco Simone, Fabien Barthez and Ludovic Giuly, but the current crop have the raw talent to match their illustrious forbears.

Yet despite all this season's success ➤

Defeat...Lucas Bernardi is consoled by Porto goalkeeper Vitor Baia in the 2004 Champions League Final

## THE POWER CURVE

### The key figures behind Monaco

**DMITRY RYBOLOVLEV**
The Russian oligarch bought a majority share in Monaco in December 2011. His relationship with agent Jorge Mendes is the subject of much media attention while his dealings with Donald Trump are also under scrutiny.

**VADIM VASILYEV**
An economics graduate who first hooked up with Rybolovlev in his fertiliser production business. Was his advisor at Monaco before becoming sporting director and then taking on the role of vice-president and director general.

**FILIPS DHONDT**
The Belgian is Vasilyev's advisor and has a good footballing pedigree, having already spent five years at Monaco after stints at Club Brugge in his homeland and Ujpest Dosza in Hungary.

**ANTONIO CORDON**
Responsible for recruitment and youth development, he arrived from Villarreal of Spain last summer. Discreet and hardworking, he has a huge network of contacts.

**BERTRAND REUZEAU**
Played for Marseille and Montpellier, and spent 11 years at Paris Saint-Germain's academy before joining Monaco as academy director.

## THE STADIUM AND THE FANS

Built next to the sea, the Stade Louis II is the centrepiece of a sporting complex that includes an Olympic swimming pool, a multisports hall – for handball, volleyball and basketball – administrative buildings and the football club's academy.

Situated in the Fontvieille area of Monaco, the complex was built at the insistence of the Principality's Prince Rainier III, who first came up with the idea in 1979. Constructed between 1981 and 1984, the football stadium incorporates an athletics track and is unique in that the pitch is at 8.35m above road level, on the roof of the building's four-floor 1,700-capacity car park. This has led to a number of problems keeping the grass in top condition, forcing Monaco to use a mobile lighting rig designed to reproduce the natural effects of the sun's rays.

With a capacity of 18,523 the Stade Louis II was officially opened by Prince Rainier in January 1985. It's clearly a small ground, but given Monaco's population is less than 40,000 this is no surprise. The club has not been able to post an average season attendance of over 10,000 since the 2007-08 season.

Given the somewhat transient nature of some of Monaco's economic drivers, it's perhaps unsurprising that Monaco aren't renowned for having the most passionate support. Yet while they may be few in number, the unofficial supporters' club, the Ultras Monaco 1994, work hard to create some passion both home and away. Born out of previous supporters' groups, predominantly the Supporters Rouges et Blancs, the Ultras have an avowed zero tolerance policy towards racism and discrimination, as well as being resolutely apolitical.

Because of Monaco's unique geopolitical status you might think there's no traditional derby match. But the Principality's proximity to Nice – which is just 20km away– has given birth to the Derby de la Cote d'Azur.

The general understanding of the difference between the two clubs is that Nice is the people's team, while Monaco (for obvious reasons) is the home of the bourgeois football fan. On the pitch, honours are just about even this season. Nice handed out a 4-0 thrashing in September, but Monaco gained revenge with an emphatic 3-0 home win at the start of February.

**No queues...the club's ticket office**

and thrill-a-minute football, Monaco are firmly rooted to the foot of the table of average attendances in France. Although their Stade Louis II has a capacity of over 18,000, average attendance this season has been a measly 9,061 – the worst in Ligue 1. While it's true that this is an improvement on last season's mark of 7,838 there must be question marks over how a club can aspire to build a dynasty when large support for the club is so clearly lacking.

With all the cash swilling around at Monaco, money through the turnstiles is the last of the club's worries. But if they want to be competing at Europe's top table year after year, season after season, is it realistic to expect top players to stay there for three, four, five years when they could be earning well and performing in front of 60,000 home supporters elsewhere?

What's more, it will be really interesting to see whether Monaco can keep this team together, and even whether Jardim himself will stay put at the end of this campaign. Already the big boys of the Premier League are circling. Both Manchester clubs covet Fabinho, Arsenal and Spurs are keen on Bakayoko, while Chelsea are reported to be making overtures towards Mbappe.

Football being what it is, the likelihood is that a number of these remarkable young players will not be wearing Monaco's famous red and white colours this time next year.

All the more reason, then, to savour the performances of this exciting outfit right now, because – for as long as they stay together – this is a team to make you fall in love with football all over again. WS

**Silverware...with the League Cup in 2003**

**Wanted...Mbappe scores against Manchester City**

## THE COACH

**LEONARDO JARDIM (Por)**
Age 42 (01.08.74)
The Portuguese coach took over at Monaco from Claudio Ranieri in 2014 and has since produced a young side that is one of the most exciting in Europe.

With no experience himself as a professional player, he began studying to become a coach at the age of 24 and started his managerial career three years later as an assistant.

Having first worked in the Portuguese lower leagues, he got his big break in 2011 when he was named coach of Braga.

Stints with Olympiakos in Greece and Sporting followed, before he became Monaco boss, in June 2014. Now regarded as one of the brightest young coaches in world football.

## THE KIT

HOME KIT SECOND KIT THIRD KIT

# THE SQUAD

## GOALKEEPERS

**Morgan DE SANCTIS (Ita)**
**Age 39 (26.03.77)**
Came to the end of his contract with Roma last summer and signed a one-year deal with Monaco as back-up to Subasic.

**Sy SEYDOU (Sen)**
**Age 21 (12.12.95)**
A right-footed Senegal under-20 international, born in Dakar, he joined Monaco at the start of the 2014-15 campaign.

**Danijel SUBASIC (Cro)**
**Age 32 (27.10.84)**
Stands 6ft 3in and has made over 200 appearances for the club since joining from Hajduk Split in January 2012 .

## DEFENDERS

**Abdou DIALLO**
**Age 20 (04.05.96)**
Came through the ranks at Monaco but spent last season on loan at Zulte Waregem in Belgium. Can also play in midfield.

**Kamil GLIK (POL)**
**Age 29 (03.02.88)**
A rugged central defender with a knack for scoring goals. He spent five years with Torino in Italy before joining Monaco in July 2016 for €11m.

**JEMERSON (Bra)**
**Age 24 (24.08.92)**
The central defender joined Monaco in January 2016 for €10m after making 100 appearances for Atletico Mineiro in Brazil.

**JORGE (Bra)**
**Age 20 (28.03.96)**
Left-back who impressed in his home country after making his debut with Flamengo at the age of 18. Has signed a four-year deal.

**Benjamin MENDY**
**Age 22 (17.07.94)**
A much-admired full-back, he started his career with Le Havre before joining Marseille in 2013. Joined Monaco on a five-year deal last summer.

**Kevin N'DORAM**
**Age 21 (22.01.96)**
Central defender who has been at the club since 2010 and made his debut in 2016. The son of Chad international Japhet N'Doram.

**Pierre-Daniel NGUINDA NDIFFON (Cam)**
**Age 20 (18.06.96)**
Has been with Monaco since 2011 and signed a three-year pro contract in July 2016.

**Andrea RAGGI (Ita)**
**Age 32 (24.06.84)**
Played for six different sides in Italy before joining Monaco from Bologna in 2012. Now closing in on 200 appearances for the club.

**Djibril SIDIBE**
**Age 24 (29.07.92)**
French international full-back who can play on either flank. Played over 100 games for Lille before joining Monaco at the start of this season.

**Almamy TOURE (Mli)**
**Age 20 (28.04.96)**
Has been with Monaco since 2010 and made a scoring debut for the first team in the French Cup against Nantes in February 2015.

## MIDFIELDERS

**Tiemoue BAKAYOKO**
**Age 22 (17.08.94)**
Paris-born, with Ivorian roots, the defensive midfielder was signed from Rennes in 2015 for €8m but has rejected a new contract.

**Gabriel BOSCHILIA (Bra)**
**Age 20 (05.03.96)**
Attacking midfielder signed from Sao Paulo in August 2015 who was ruled out for the season after an injury in February against Metz.

**Nabil DIRAR (Mor)**
**Age 31 (25.02.86)**
International winger who's been with Monaco for five years. Banned for eight games in 2016 for making head contact with a ref.

**FABINHO (Bra)**
**Age 23 (23.10.93)**
Originally a defender but now converted into a defensive midfielder. Highly coveted following a series of outstanding performances.

**Thomas LEMAR**
**Age 21 (12.11.95)**
Born in Guadeloupe, he joined Monaco from Caen in 2015 and made his international debut against Ivory Coast in November 2016.

**Joao MOUTINHO (Por)**
**Age 30 (08.09.86)**
Signed from Porto in 2013 for €25m. Has since made over 150 club appearances and is also closing in on a century of international caps.

**Bernardo SILVA (Por)**
**Age 22 (10.08.94)**
The exciting attacking midfielder played just three games for Benfica before joining Monaco on loan, then permanently for €15.75m.

## FORWARDS

**Irvin CARDONA**
**Age 19 (08.08.97)**
Capped at under-19 and under-20 levels, he joined Monaco's academy in 2012.

**Guido CARRILLO (ARG)**
**Age 25 (25.05.91)**
Stands 6ft 2in and signed from Estudiantes in 2015. Strong, athletic and good in the air, his lack of pace makes him more of a target man.

**Radamel FALCAO (Col)**
**Age 31 (10.02.86)**
Back after two difficult years on loan in England, he has found his scoring touch again and is once more a feared finisher on the European stage.

**Valere GERMAIN**
**Age 26 (17.04.90)**
The son of former international Bruno Germain, he had a successful loan spell at Nice last season but is now an important player under Jardim.

**Kylian MBAPPE**
**Age 18 (20.12.98)**
The club's youngest ever scorer, at 17 years and 62 days, Monaco reportedly turned down an offer of €40m from Manchester City for him.

**(ages as of 24.03.17)**

SPECIAL REPORT

# East

With huge financial power and rising crowds, the

The new Chinese Super League (CSL) campaign kicked off under the global spotlight in early March as politics and money once again overshadowed matters on the pitch. In the latest transfer window, Carlos Tevez and Oscar were lured to China on megabuck deals, arriving from Boca Juniors and Chelsea respectively, as a seemingly endless conveyor belt of star names sign deals that are far more lucrative than those on offer in Europe.

Transfer spending exploded at the start of last year as the Chinese government announced a total overhaul of the sport via an official plan aimed at winning the World Cup by 2050. Big business, which has traditionally propped up the game in China, took this as a signal to invest even further in an effort to ingratiate themselves and score political brownie points in the corridors of power in Beijing. This indeed is how the country works, with power heavily centralised and president Xi Jinping, who is seen as China's most powerful leader in a generation, commonly described as a big football fan. Xi is believed to be the major driving force behind efforts to improve his homeland's chronically bad national side, although he has never explicitly said so.

The splurging of the past 18 months or so has been spectacular. Brazil striker Hulk's transfer from Zenit to Shanghai

# tern promise

Chinese Super League is a growing force, say Cameron Wilson and John Duerden

SIPG for £47million and compatriot Alex Teixeira's move from

Donetsk to Jiangsu Suning for £42m were just two of the eye-watering deals that saw Chinese football go from relative anonymity to the big time on the world stage.

Some £350m was spent on players in January and February, yet CSL's rich backers – mostly real estate developers – found their attempts to curry political favour had backfired somewhat when the government publicly rebuked clubs for "irrational spending" on "huge transfer fees and salaries". The General Administration of Sport – a government body which controls the Chinese Football Association (CFA) – issued a raft of measures designed to rein in clubs' spendthrift ways. However, the rules remain vague and unspecified, and spending was actually up year-on-year in this year's window.

**Arrival...Carlos Tevez at Shanghai Pudong International Airport**

Instead, another set of regulatory changes have dominated proceedings so far. Last year, CSL clubs could register up to four foreign players plus one player from another AFC country in their squad for the season. On the pitch, three foreigners could be used at any one time plus another Asian, while a fifth non-Chinese player could come off the bench to replace a foreigner.

But in December the CFA and the CSL

announced they had agreed to change the rules so that a fifth foreigner could not be named on the bench and would have to sit that match out.

Most observers agreed this was a reasonable move to give typically younger domestic players on the bench more pitch time. However, in a bizarre and sudden about-turn, right slap bang in the middle of the winter transfer window, the CFA instead announced that only three foreign players could be used in a game.

This unexpected moving of the goalposts was met with alarm as many clubs had already finalised their foreign player purchases based on the previously agreed quota rule.

The CFA's timing baffled many, but local media reports stated that the change was imposed "from above" – a euphemism for the government, who felt that not enough was being done to boost the opportunities for Chinese players. There were quiet murmurs about government interference from some quarters, but even if such concerns were shouted from the rooftops they would continue to fall on deaf ears at FIFA, which has continued to ignore this issue for a very long time.

There was also a stipulation in the new rules that all clubs must field at least one under-23 player in their starting line-up and have one more on the bench.

For many years, young players' chances have been curtailed in China for non-footballing reasons: mainly a cultural bias towards seniority and a tendency for long-serving players to influence team selection. However, in a clear sign that the rules had been rushed through and not properly thought out, there was no mention of how long an under-23 player had to spend on the pitch. As a result, the start of this season was shambolic.

**Record...Oscar is the CSL's most expensive signing of all time**

**Defeat...Guangzhou Evergrande (in yellow) lost 2-1 at Shandong Luneng in their opening game**

**Support...Guangzhou Evergrande fans at a Champions League game in Australia**

Liaoning Whowin coach Ma Lin waited just 16 minutes into his side's opening game before make a mockery of the rule by substituting youngster Wang Jiao for 27-year-old Wang Liang. Unfortunately, early substitutions of under-23 players has become a trend in the early games of the new season, although some have managed to last beyond half-time. And, predictably, some clubs have opted to name a keeper as their under-23 bench player in a sign that the spirit of the rule has clearly not been widely respected.

Such dissent shows irritation on the part of the clubs towards the CFA and the bureaucrats further up the food chain for making such a fundamental rule change just weeks before the season began.

In a related matter, suspicions were also aroused by the conservative behaviour of Jiangsu Suning and Guangzhou Evergrande in the transfer window. Both clubs – by their usual big-spending standards – barely spent a penny in the most recent transfer window, while the rest of the league went about buying foreign stars that they ultimately would not be able to play. But, as is so often the case, innuendo is the order of the day and nobody was able to prove the two financial

## CHINESE LEAGUE: RECORD TRANSFERS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Oscar** | Chelsea (Eng) to Shanghai SIPG | Jan 2017 | £51m |
| **Hulk** | Zenit (Rus) to Shanghai SIPG | Jun 2016 | £47.43m |
| **Alex Teixeira** | Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) to Jiangsu Suning | Feb 2016 | £42.50m |
| **Jackson Martinez** | Atletico Madrid (Spa) to Guangzhou Evergrande | Feb 2016 | £35.70m |
| **Ramires** | Chelsea (Eng) to Jiangsu Suning | Jan 2016 | £23.80m |
| **Odion Ighalo** | Watford (Eng) to Changchun Yatai | Jan 2017 | £19.81m |
| **Zhang Chengdong** | Beijing Guoan to Hebei China Fortune | Jan 2017 | £17.37m |
| **Axel Witsel** | Zenit (Rus) to Tianjin Quanjian | Jan 2017 | £17m |
| **Elkeson** | Guangzhou Evergrande to Shanghai SIPG | Jan 2016 | £15.73m |
| **Alexandre Pato** | Villarreal (Spa) to Tianjin Quanjian | Jan 2017 | £15.30m |
| **Gervinho** | Roma (Ita) to Hebei China Fortune | Jan 2016 | £15.30m |
| **Zhao Yuhao** | Hangzhou Greentown to Hebei China Fortune | Jan 2017 | £15.13m |
| **Graziano Pelle** | Southampton (Eng) to Shandong Luneng | Jul 2016 | £12.97m |
| **Jonathan Soriano** | Red Bull Salzburg (Aut) to Beijing Guoan | Jan 2017 | £12.75m |
| **Ricardo Goulart** | Cruzeiro (Bra) to Guangzhou Evergrande | Jan 2015 | £12.75m |
| **Paulinho** | Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) to Guangzhou Evergrande | Jun 2016 | £11.9m |
| **Demba Ba** | Besiktas (Tur) to Shanghai Shenhua | Jan 2015 | £11.05m |
| **Fredy Guarin** | Internazionale (Ita) to Shanghai Shenhua | Jan 2016 | £11.05m |
| **Wang Yongpo** | Shandong Luneng to Tianjin Quanjian | Jan 2017 | £10.57m |
| **Brown Ideye** | Olympiakos (Gre) to Tianjin Teda | Jan 2017 | £10.2m |
| **Carlos Tevez** | Boca Juniors (Arg) to Shanghai Shenhua | Jan 2017 | £9m |

Imports...Ramires (left) and John Obi Mikel

Investment ...Manuel Pellegrini

powerhouses had been tipped off about the rule change in advance.

International eyes on the league are largely mesmerised by the glowing flames of the Chinese transfer market, but beyond the hype lies an entertaining league that is sustained by a deep and long-standing football culture.

Luiz Felipe Scolari's Guangzhou Evergrande, champions for the last six years, are favourites again this term. Their fans are sometimes labelled "*chengji qiumi*" (glory hunters) by supporters of other teams, but the club has always had a decent following throughout its various guises since the professional league was launched in 1994.

With two AFC Champions League wins, the Cantonese club have the magic ingredients: a winning culture, quality foreign players and the best local players. And when they signed international after international back in 2011 and 2012, the opposition would always complain that the southerners were hogging all the talent.

Now though, others are following suit and this has started forcing up the price of domestic talent.

Take Hebei China Fortune, for example. Last season was a first in the top flight for the northerners and Li Tie, the former Everton midfielder, led the team to fifth in August before being fired to make way for Manuel Pellegrini. The Chilean finished in seventh place but the team has since spent almost £100m.

Some of that was spent on Hernanes from Juventus, but the vast majority went on local talent, with nearly £20m going to Beijing Guoan for Zhang Chengdong, a versatile defender who had a spell with Rayo Vallecano but played just one league game in Spain. There were other locals who commanded seven figure sums.

Moving east to the Yangtze Delta region, there lies a complex three-way rivalry between three of the league's richest clubs: Jiangsu Suning, and Shanghai teams SIPG and Shenhua.

The latter are one of China's oldest teams and have more or less played at the same location and with the same identity in the top league since 1994. Therefore it's hardly surprising that they have one of the strongest identities in Chinese football and a fanatical fan base known for committed support and occasional over-exuberance.

Shenhua finished fourth last year and new coach Gustavo Poyet now has Tevez, but other signings look less impressive.

Their city rivals SIPG, with Hulk and Oscar, play the Shanghai Derby on May 20, a fixture that goes back to the early 2000s and one which rightly enjoys a tremendous reputation in the country.

SIPG have certainly been spending as if time is against them and they could be big challengers. Under Andre Villas-Boas there is an abundance of firepower. Oscar arrived in January to complement Hulk in attack and the pair have started the season in good form.

The addition of driving Uzbek midfielder Odil Ahmedov made fewer headlines but could be a masterstroke. SIPG's only real problem could be the fact that they are also in the Asian Champions League. While Guangzhou Evergrande have plenty of experience dealing with domestic and continental issues, Shanghai don't.

Guangzhou Evergrande, champions for the last six years, are favourites again this term

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu province and now home to Ramires and Alex Teixeira, Jiangsu Suning have also been around in one form or another since professional football began in China. It remains to be seen if Korean coach Choi Yong-soo, a surprise appointment last summer to replace Dan Petrescu, can hold his own against his big-name counterparts.

Their fans, forever occupied with hating Shenhua in a lopsided rivalry with a club with too many other enemies, will be hoping their side can go one better than last year's runners-up spot.

Expect SIPG to finish second and Shenhua, Jiangsu, capital giants Beijing Guoan and Shandong Luneng, plus perhaps newly rich Hebei, to battle it out for the three or four Asian Champions League spots on offer, depending on who wins the CFA Cup. WS

Football fan...China's president, Xi Jinping

# CHINESE SUPER LEAGUE: 2017

## BEIJING GUOAN

**Last season:** 5th
**Stadium:** Workers' Stadium (capacity 66,161; 2016 average 38,140) in central Beijing, northern China.
**Ownership:** Recently changed hands, with real estate Sinobo Group buying a controlling stake from the state-owned investment company CITIC Group.
**History:** One of the CSL "old guard", they are one of the country's best supported clubs with a large, loyal fan base.
**Recent transfers:** Despite their size, the club has a reputation for thrift. Spanish striker Jonathan Soriano from Austrian club Red Bull Salzburg was the only foreign acquisition last window.
**The coach:** Jose Gonzalez. The former Cadiz player and coach.
**Foreign players:** Renato Augusto (Bra), Ralf (Bra), Jonathan Soriano (Spa), Burak Yilmaz (Tur), Egor Krimets (Uzb).
**Local players:** China internationals Yu Dabao, Yang Zhi and Zhang Xizhe are part of a strong local squad.

## CHANGCHUN YATAI

**Last season:** 12th
**Stadium:** Development Area Stadium (capacity 25,000; 2016 average 15,202) in Changchun, north-east China.
**Ownership:** Local conglomerate Jilin Yatai Group has owned the club since its founding in 1996.
**History:** Ever present in the CSL since 2005, the league's most northerly side were shock winners in 2007 but in recent years they have become a fixture in the relegation struggle.
**Recent transfers:** The normally fiscally tight club raised eyebrows by splashing £20m on Watford striker Odion Ighalo.
**The coach:** Lee Jang-soo. A veteran of the China coaching scene as former Beijing Guoan and Guangzhou Evergrande coach.
**Foreign players:** Odion Ighalo (Nga), Marinho (Bra), Anzur Ismailov (Uzb), Szabolcs Huszti (Hun), Bruno Meneghel (Bra).
**Local players:** Short on big domestic names, although Englishman Jack Sealy counts as local, being a Hong Kong citizen. Defender Pei Shuai recently won his first China cap.

Turkish import...Burak Yilmaz

## CHONGQING LIFAN

**Last season:** 8th
**Stadium:** Chongqing Olympic Sports Center (capacity 58,860; 2016 average) in Chongqing municipality, south-west China.
**Ownership:** Recently taken over by Dangdai International Group following a long ownership by local motor company Lifan.
**History:** Something of a yo-yo club, the team is one of the best-supported in the league, despite being a fixture in the bottom half of the table.
**Recent transfers:** Modest investments, with Hyuri on loan from Atletico Mineiro their sole foreign signing of late.
**The coach:** Chang Woe-Ryong. The South Korean is a veteran of coaching in his native land, Japan and China.
**Foreign players:** Fernandinho (Bra), Hyuri (Bra), Alan Kardec (Bra), Goran Milovic (Cro), Jung Woo-young (SKo).
**Local players:** Newly joined Zheng Tao brings a decade of CSL experience to a squad not blessed with stand-out domestic players.

Champions... Guangzhou Evergrande

## GUANGZHOU EVERGRANDE

**Last season:** 1st
**Stadium:** Tianhe Stadium (capacity 58,500; 2016 average 44,483) in Guangzhou, on the south China coast.
**Ownership:** Bought by real estate giants Evergrande in 2009.
**History:** Spent most of their existence in second tier until a big buyout propelled the club to six league championships in a row and two Asian Champions League trophies.
**Recent transfers:** Traditionally big spenders, but very conservative in the last transfer window. Jeonbuk defender Kim Hyung-il and Zhang Chenglin from second division Beijing Renhe were the only arrivals.
**The coach:** Luiz Felipe Scolari. The former Brazil, Portugal and Chelsea boss joined in 2015.
**Foreign players:** Jackson Martinez (Col), Paulinho (Bra), Alan Carvalho (Bra), Kim Hyung-il (SKo), Ricardo Goulart (Bra).
**Local players:** The lion's share of domestic talent ply their trade here, such as striker Gao Lin, defender Zhang Linpeng and goalkeeper Zeng Cheng.

Surprise...Changchun Yatai's big-money signing, striker Odion Ighalo

Local talent...Tianjin Quanjian's Liu Yiming (left) challenges Xiao Zhi of Guangzhou R&F

## GUANGZHOU R&F

**Last season:** 6th
**Stadium:** Yuexiushan Stadium (capacity 15,000; 2016 average 9,831) in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, south coast of China.
**Ownership:** The nomadic club, which has changed owner and city several times, is now owned by real estate developer R&F.
**History:** Previously based in Shenyang, Changcha, the club has been based at the home of Guangdong football, Yuexiushan stadium, since 2011.
**Recent transfers:** The moderately well-funded club had a quiet window which saw former Coritiba midfielder Junior Urso join from Shandong Luneng.
**The coach:** Dragan Stojkovic. The former Yugoslavia and Marseille star started his coaching career in Japan.
**Foreign players:** Apostolos Giannou (Aus), Renatinho (Bra), Junior Urso (Bra), Eran Zahavi (Isr), Jang Hyun-Soo (SKo).
**Local players:** Goalkeeper Cheng Yuelei, forward Xiao Zhi and China left-back/winger Jiang Zhipeng are the pick of the bunch.

## GUIZHOU ZHICHENG

**Last season:** 2nd in League One (promoted).
**Stadium:** Olympic Sports Center (capacity 52,888) in Guiyang, Guizhou, south west China.
**Ownership:** Local Real estate developer Guizhou Hengfeng bought a controlling stake in 2016 from state-owned Guizhou Zhicheng investment group.
**History:** First ever CSL season. The club worked their way up from the amateur leagues before a surprise promotion last year as runners-up in the second tier.
**Recent transfers:** One of the smallest budgets in the league. Former QPR midfielder Tjaronn Chery and ex-Hearts defender Ryan McGowan are their most notable signings.
**The coach:** Li Bing. Locally born, he has spent most of his coaching career as an assistant.
**Foreign players:** Nikica Jelavic (Cro), Ali Ghazal (Egy), Michael Olunga (Ken), Tjaronn Chery (Hol), Ryan McGowan (Aus).
**Local players:** Nigeria-born Hong Kong international Festus Baise is a stand-out local talent, alongside winger Chang Feiya, who was surprisingly loaned to the club by Guangzhou R&F.

## HEBEI CHINA FORTUNE

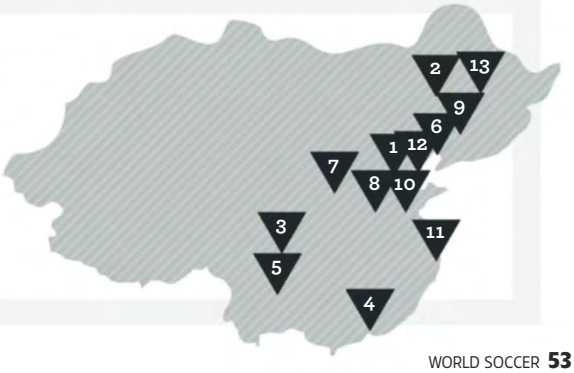
**Last season:** 7th
**Stadium:** Olympic Sports Stadium (capacity 33,572; 2016 average 18,469) in Qinhuangdao, Hebei Province, north China.
**Ownership:** China Fortune Land Development took over the club after it won promotion to the CSL in 2015.
**History:** Founded just six years ago, the club has worked its way up from the bottom tier and remains a new team with new fans.
**Recent transfers:** The proverbial nouveau riche, they continued their transfer splurge in the last window with a £7m deal for Hernanes from Juventus, alongside Chinese international defender Ren Hang.
**The coach:** Manuel Pellegrini. Expectations are high for the former Real Madrid and Manchester City boss.
**Foreign players:** Ezequiel Lavezzi (Uru), Aloisio (Bra), Hernanes (Bra), Stephane Mbia (Cam), Kim Ju-young (SKo).
**Local players:** Well-stocked with local talent, Jiang Ning, Ding Hai Feng, Ren Hang have all seen international action recently.

## HENAN JIANYE

**Last season:** 13th
**Stadium:** Huanghai Stadium (capacity 29,860; 2016 average 17,282) in Zhengzhou, Henan ➤

## CHINESE SUPER LEAGUE 2017

1 Beijing Guoan
2 Changchun Yatai
3 Chongqing Lifan
4 Guangzhou Evergrande Guangzhou R&F
5 Guizhou Zhicheng
6 Hebei China Fortune
7 Henan Jianye
8 Jiangsu Suning
9 Liaoning Whowin
10 Shandong Luneng
11 Shanghai Shenhua Shanghai SIPG
12 Tianjin Quanjian Tianjin Teda
13 Yanbian Funde



## CHINESE SUPER LEAGUE: 2017

province, north China.
**Ownership:** The Jianye real estate company have owned the team since its inception in 1994.
**History:** Stable, well-supported lower-ranking club that has never changed name. Twice winners of the Chinese second tier.
**Recent transfers:** Careful spenders. Czech Republic midfielder Borek Dockal from Sparta Prague was their key signing.
**The coach:** Jia Xiuquan. Veteran Chinese boss.
**Foreign players:** Christian Bassogog (Cam), Borek Dockal (CzR), Eddi Gomes (Den), Javier Patino (Phi), Ahmad Al Salih (Syr).
**Local players:** Up and coming midfielder Feng Gang is currently on loan from Hebei China Fortune but the team has sold its most talented Chinese players.

### JIANGSU SUNING

**Last season:** 2nd
**Stadium:** Nanjing (capacity 61,443; 2016 average 38,992) in Jiangsu province in the Yangtze Delta region of East China.
**Ownership:** Taken over by cash-heavy retail group Suning in 2015.
**History:** Well-established club with strong support who are noted for hatred of regional rivals Shanghai Shenhua.
**Recent transfers:** Didn't sign any big names after breaking the bank last season to bring in Ramires and Alex Teixeira.
**The coach:** Choi Yong-soo. The former South Korea coach joined last summer.
**Foreign players:** Ramires (Bra), Alex Teixeira (Bra), Roger Martinez (Col), Hong Jeong-ho (SKo).
**Local players:** Some decent Chinese talent includes national-

Settled...Alex Teixeira

Former Saint...Graziano Pelle

team mainstay Wu Xi, emerging youngster Li Ang and winger Ji Xiang.

### LIAONING WHOWIN

**Last season:** 11th
**Stadium:** Olympic Sports Centre (capacity 60,000; 2016 average 22,488) in Shenyang, Liaoning province, north-east China.
**Ownership:** Logistics company Hongyun have owned the club for over a decade.
**History:** Historic, long-standing club who were winners of the Asia Club Cup in 1990 before turning professional in 1994.
**Recent transfers:** Selling club who again lost key domestic players to bigger teams. Australian internationals Robbie Kruse and James Holland were good pick-ups however.
**The coach:** Ma Lin. One of only two Chinese coaches in the CSL.
**Foreign players:** James Holland (Hol), Assani Lukimya (DRC), Anthony Ujah (Nga), James Chamanga (Zam), Robbie Kruse (Aus).
**Local players:** Former player Yang Xu, who has 47 caps and 22 goals for the national team, has returned on loan from Tianjin Quanjian.

### SHANDONG LUNENG

**Last season:** 14th
**Stadium:** Olympic Stadium (capacity 56,808; 2016 average 18,935) in Jinan, Shandong province, north China.
**Ownership:** Luneng Group, a state-owned provincial power company.
**History:** Ever present in the top division since professionalism started in 1994, the four-times champions are another of the "old guard" in the CSL.
**Recent transfers:** Well-funded but a very quiet window. The return of former player Zhou Haibin was the only notable acquisition.
**The coach:** Felix Magath. The tough German is in his first job since leaving Fulham in 2014.
**Foreign players:** Gil (Bra), Diego Tardelli (Bra), Graziano Pelle (Ita), Papiss Cisse (Sen).
**Local players:** Some solid domestic talent in the shape of midfielders Hao Junmin, Liu Binbin and national team goalkeeper Wang Dalei.

### SHANGHAI SHENHUA

**Last season:** 4th
**Stadium:** Hongkou Stadium (capacity 33,060; 2016 average 22,690) in Shanghai Municipality, Yangtze Delta region, east China.
**Ownership:** Taken over by Fortune 500 behemoth Greenland Group in 2014.
**History:** One of China's most historic and influential clubs. Known for moderately sized yet fiercely partisan support at one of China's few football-specific stadiums.
**Recent transfers:** With ample funds they attracted global headlines with the capture of Carlos Tevez in January.
**The coach:** Gus Poyet. Joined in December and has something to prove following a recent indifferent spell in the Real Betis hot seat.
**Foreign players:** Carlos Tevez (Arg), Giovanni Moreno (Col), Kim Kee-hee (SKo), Obafemi Martins (Nga), Freddy Guarin (Col).

Centre of attention... Carlos Tevez

**Local players:** Shanghai-born midfielder Cao Yunding received a long-awaited international call-up last year. Defenders Li Jianbin and Bai Jiajun have also been in the national squad of late.

## SHANGHAI SIPG

**Last season:** 3rd
**Stadium:** Shanghai Stadium (capacity 56,842; 2016 average 28,012) in the Shanghai Municipality, Yangtze Delta region, east China.
**Ownership:** Established by legendary Chinese coach Xu Genbao as Shanghai East Asia in 2005, then sold to state-owned Shanghai International Port Group in 2015.
**History:** Strong local roots and a very successful youth system, the club also has a rapidly growing fan base.
**Recent transfers:** With overflowing coffers they have been big spenders, with Chelsea's Brazilian star Oscar being their blockbuster purchase in the last window.
**The coach:** Andre Villas-Boas. Despite his relative youth he has brought solid management experience to the Chinese league this year.
**Foreign players:** Elkeson (Bra), Hulk (Bra), Oscar (Bra), Ricardo Carvalho (Por), Odil Ahmedov (Uzb).
**Local players:** Wu Lei is probably China's top forward, while Cai Huikang is a burly defensive midfielder who is now a regular for the national team.

Dynamic duo...Tianjin Quanjian's Alexandre Pato (left) and Axel Witsel celebrate

## TIANJIN QUANJIAN

**Last season:** 1st in League One (promoted).
**Stadium:** Haihe Educational Stadium (capacity 30,000;) in Tianjin municipality, north China
**Ownership:** Quanjian, a company selling traditional Chinese medicines fronted by flamboyant chairman Shu Yuhui, took over in July 2015.
**History:** Newly promoted to the CSL, the club faces fierce competition from established Tianjin Teda in the bums-on-seats stakes.
**Recent transfers:** Another nouveau riche club that spent big on foreign and domestic stars, most notably Axel Witsel from Zenit.
**The coach:** Fabio Cannavaro. Italian World Cup-winning captain who is back in China after a spell in Saudi Arabia. Coached Guangzhou Evergrande to the title in 2015.
**Foreign players:** Axel Witsel (Blg), Geuvanio (Bra), Junior Moraes (Bra), Alexandre Pato (Bra), Kwon Kyung-won (SKo).
**Local players:** Sun Ke, Wang Yongpo and Zhao Xuri are three high-quality Chinese internationals.

## TIANJIN TEDA

**Last season:** 10th
**Stadium:** Olympic Stadium (capacity 59,696; 2016 average 22,081) in Tianjin municipality, north China.
**Ownership:** In the hands of the state-owned TEDA development conglomerate since 1999.
**History:** A middle-ranking team whose main excitement comes from the derby with Beijing Guoan.
**Recent transfers:** Not known for splashing out, although John Obi Mikel – signed on a free from Chelsea – is probably their highest-ever paid player.
**The coach:** Jaime Pacheco. Former Beijing Guoan boss who made his name in Portugal as coach of Boavista.
**Foreign players:** Brown Ideye (Nga), John Obi Mikel (Nga), Mbaye Diagne (Sen), Nemanja Gudelj (Ser), Hwang Seok-ho (SKo).
**Local players:** Lacking real domestic talent, but defender Hu Rentian won a few caps last year.

## YANBIAN FUNDE

**Last season:** 9th
**Stadium:** People's Stadium, Yanji (capacity 30,000; 2016 average 19,305) in Jilin province, north east China.
**Ownership:** Local government joint ownership with Funde insurance co.
**History:** Situated close to the North Korean border, many of the players and fans are ethnic Korean Chinese.
**Recent transfers:** Hungarian international Richard Guzmics has been the only significant signing.
**The coach:** Park Tae-ha. Former South Korea national coach.
**Foreign players:** Bubacarr Trawally (Gam), Richard Guzmics (Hun), Nikola Petkovic (Ser), Yoon Bit-Garam (SKo), Kim Seung-Dae (SKo).
**Local players:** Very modestly staffed, although midfielder Chi Zhongguo won a cap for China earlier this year.

*Club guide by Cameron Wilson*

# 6 of the best

# Goal creators

Nick Bidwell profiles half a dozen of Europe's most successful assist providers

## 1 Jens TOORNSTRA

**FEYENOORD & HOLLAND**

At a club where teamwork is all important, individuals tend to take a back-seat. But that would be extremely unfair on an attacking midfielder who has been so important to Feyenoord's table-topping position in the Eredivisie. Able to play on either flank or through the middle, the 27-year-old is the motor under the Rotterdam side's bonnet. A player with the widest of repertoires, he is physical, hard-running and forceful, yet intelligent, aware and nimble. A graduate of the Alphen aan den Rijn academy – which is regarded as the best amateur soccer school in Holland – he studied Tax Law and Economics at Amsterdam University, cut his pro teeth at Den Haag and shone at Utrecht prior to signing for Feyenoord in August 2014. He earned two caps for the national side under Louis Van Gaal in an end-of-season tour to the Far East in 2013 and is currently a hot tip for a return to the fold, with many pundits suggesting he should replace golden oldie Wesley Sneijder.

## 2 Pablo PIATTI

**ESPANYOL (SPA) & ARGENTINA**

Crisis-club Valencia have specialised of late in decisions which backfire, and one of their most ill-advised moves was to declare their Argentinian left-winger surplus to requirements last summer. A grateful Espanyol took him off their hands – first on loan, then signing a permanent deal in February for €1.5m – and this season he has been quite inspired as a provider. A league winner as a teenager in his homeland with Estudiantes in 2006, he has been earning his corn in Spain for the best part of a decade, spending three campaigns at Almeria and five with Valencia. He played alongside Sergio Aguero, Angel Di Maria and Ever Banega in the Argentinian team that won the Under-20 World Cup in 2007.

## 3 Wilson EDUARDO

**BRAGA & PORTUGAL**

The elder brother of Internazionale and Portugal midfield star Joao Mario, he has seen his own name up in lights of late, celebrated for his power and incisiveness on the left flank, a flair for locating space inside and his selfless approach work. Brought up, like his sibling, at Sporting's Alcochete academy on the outskirts of Lisbon, the 26-year-old is currently in the form of his life, with many Sporting fans wondering why he was never given a proper chance in their first team. Continually farmed out on loan, he left permanently for Braga at the start of last season and a week before Christmas last year he had his revenge, scoring the only goal as Braga beat Sporting in their backyard. "Wilson used to be regarded at Sporting as the ugly duckling," laughs Braga B boss Abel. Well, not any more. Once linked to Manchester United, Liverpool and Chelsea, he was the mainstay of various junior Portugal teams and won 14 caps for the under 21s.

## 4 Jose CALLEJON

**NAPOLI (ITA) & SPAIN**

Torino's Joe Hart certainly knows all about the creative instincts of the right-winger who set up no fewer than three of his side's goals in Napoli's 5-3 December thumping of the English keeper's side. Lightning quick, magnetically drawn to the byline and usually inch-perfect in his crossing, the 30-year-old former Real Madrid and Espanyol wide man is arguably the Neapolitans' most potent attacking weapon. And in addition to being a threat himself, he is also assiduous in tracking back and covering. Since arriving from Real in July 2013, he has missed only two Serie A games and prior to a recent red-card ban had appeared in 113 consecutive fixtures. In the past he has played under some of the world's best coaches, including Rafa Benitez (Napoli), Mauricio Pochettino (Espanyol) and Jose Mourinho (Real Madrid).

## 5 Yunus MALLI

**WOLFSBURG (GER) & TURKEY**

Up to their necks in choppy relegation waters, Wolfsburg will need all the final-ball magic that their 25-year-old attacking midfielder can muster. Having stumped up €12.5m to lure him away from Mainz in January, fingers will be crossed that the new boy delivers post-haste, especially in his extraordinary inventiveness and brilliant set-piece work. Supposedly brought in to replace Julian Draxler, who left for Paris Saint-Germain, the German-born Turkey international is, in fact, a totally different type of player. Whereas Draxler is more comfortable in wide areas, Malli is a genuine number 10; a strategist of vision and silky touch who is excellent at playing between the lines. Possessing a strong team ethic, he is always keen to be involved and do his share of the hard work. He represented Germany at youth level, notably helping his side reach the semi-finals of the 2015 European Under-21 Championship, but he later opted to switch allegiance to the homeland of his parents. Renowned for his low media profile, he is timid and almost bashful in his responses to reporters' questions.

## 6 SEBA

**OLYMPIAKOS (GRE) & BRAZIL**

A powerfully built left-winger who has proved a most productive supply line of chances for the perennial Greek champions this season. Now 24, he is hard to derail once he picks up speed and can cause no end of damage with his tricks. An excellent leader of the counter-attacking charge, he is in his element when rumbling forward from deep. Bought from Portuguese side Estoril in August 2015, he was rumoured to be heading for the Olympiakos exit last summer, with a number of teams in his homeland and Mexico reportedly interested, but he was not allowed to leave. Twice capped by Brazil at under-21 level in 2011, he first emerged from the youth ranks of Cruzeiro and came to Europe as a teenager, learning his chops in the Porto B team.

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

# Talentscout

SOUTH AMERICAN UNDER-20s

**WORDS:** Tim Vickery

Uruguay won the South American Youth Championship in February, finishing a comfortable five points ahead of the rest of the field. Just as importantly, they qualified for the Under-20 World Cup, to be held in South Korea in May and June – as they have done without fail since Oscar Tabarez took overall control of the country's national teams 11 years ago.

Uruguay will be joined in South Korea by Ecuador, Venezuela and Argentina, who just pipped Brazil to the final slot.

In truth, the continent's traditional big two were both hugely disappointing and that dragged down the quality of the South American tournament, which was staged in Ecuador.

Playing nine games in less than four weeks, the competition has a gruelling calendar – and the dreadful pitches in the group phase did not help. Even so, a new generation will have picked up valuable experience and many of those on show will surely now go on to represent their country at senior level.

## Rodrigo BENTANCUR

**Age 19 (05.06.97), Boca Juniors (Arg) & Uruguay**

**What they say**

Boca youth-team coach Carlos Navarro Montoya: "I remember the first time I saw him and I said, 'this tall skinny kid has something'. I was watching an extraordinary player."

Fabian Coito, Uruguay Under-20 coach: "Bentancur is a top-level player who has given us more volume of play than our previous under-20 sides, who didn't have a player with his characteristics, who has developed in another country and has a feel for the game that is a little different."

**The story so far**

Rejected by Penarol at the age of 13, he tried his luck across the River Plate with Boca Juniors, was accepted and progressed up the club's youth ranks, making his first-team debut in April 2015. He has since consolidated himself as a key member of Boca's midfield.

**The next step**

Juventus are likely to exercise the first option they acquired when Carlos Tevez moved back to Boca. However, should they decide against doing so, there will be no shortage of big-name suitors.

**Strengths**

Lanky, talented and versatile, he looks a little like a left-footed version of Lucho Gonzalez. Capable of fulfilling a variety of midfield functions, he reads the game in front of him well and often wins possession through well-timed interceptions. He links the play nicely, has a surprising turn of pace and finds interesting angles for his passes.

**Weaknesses**

His defending needs to improve, particularly when the ball is played in behind him – which exposes a perceived lack of speed on the turn. He can also over-run the ball when carrying it forward and has an occasional tendency to pass backwards without looking hard enough. Needs to curb a habit of diving into rash tackles.

## Bryan CABEZAS

**Age 20 (20.03.97), Atalanta (Ita) & Ecuador**
Signed after starring for Independiente del Valle in last year's Libertadores Cup, he was the hosts' big hope and was the most decisive figure of the second stage of the tournament, offering a constant threat down the flank.

## Lautaro MARTINEZ

**Age 19 (22.08.97), Racing & Argentina**
Rangy centre-forward whose four goals in the last four games were just enough to sneak Argentina over the line and into the last qualification slot for the Under-20 World Cup.

## Carlos CUESTA

**Age 18 (09.03.99), Atletico Nacional & Colombia**
Centre-back who looked tired towards the end of the competition but who looks a magnificent prospect, especially as he is young enough to play in the next version of this tournament.

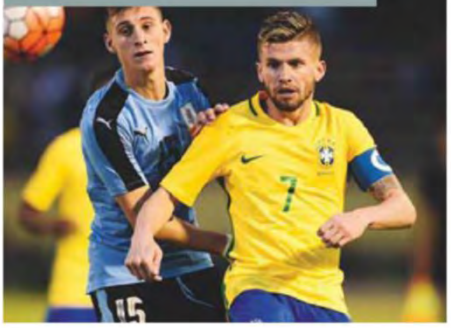
## Nicolas SCHIAPPACASSE

**Age 18 (12.01.99), Atletico Madrid B (Spa) & Uruguay**
Quick striker who terrified opponents with his capacity to get behind their defensive line. He impressed with the timing of his runs and the coolness of his finishing.

## Wuilker FARINEZ

**Age 19 (15.02.98), Caracas & Venezuela**
Highly rated goalkeeper who has already accumulated considerable experience at club level and who was even included in his country's senior squad for the Copa Americas of 2015 and 2016. Although he is somewhat on the small side for his position, he is wonderfully lithe and is a confident figure who spreads belief through those in front of him.

## CAIO HENRIQUE



**Age 19 (31.07.97), Atletico Madrid (Spa) & Brazil**
A deep-lying, left-footed midfielder who rarely wasted a pass, always looked unhurried when building an attack from the back and regularly gave his side a platform in the opposition's half. A promising organiser, although he could have been more involved in the subsequent phases of possession and struggled to last 90 minutes.

## Pervis ESTUPINAN

**Age 19 (21.01.98), Granada B (Spa) & Ecuador**
Imposingly strong and athletic left-back who made the move to Spain last year from LDU of Quito. Mostly stood out in the tournament for his powerful surges with the ball and displayed the capacity to either cut inside or go on the outside of a defender. Extremely reliable when it came to finding a pass at the end of a run, he linked up well with winger Bryan Cabezas.

## Yangel HERRERA

**Age 19 (07.01.98), New York City (USA, on loan from Manchester City, Eng) & Venezuela**
Signed during the competition from Atletico Venezuela, he is a central midfielder who works box-to-box, appears to have time on the ball to choose his options, passes well and carries a goal threat in the air and with his right foot. He is, however, a touch impetuous and picks up too many cards.

"Working at a club like Bayern helps you develop. Every day that goes by I feel I'm a better player. The €35m is money well spent"

Facetoface

RENATO SANCHES

# "Things have not started so well...but my moment will come"

A winner at last summer's European Championship, the Portuguese teenager's first season at Bayern Munich has been tough

**You're still only 19 but you've already gone through a lot in your career. How does that feel?**
Sometimes when I'm at home I think about it. But it's part of the job. Kids – well, not kids – but youngsters of my age are increasingly achieving success very fast. Younger players are now getting more opportunities and are living up to expectations. Of course it leads to big changes, with different routines, family life and friends, but it's part of the game.

**Have you had to grow up more quickly?**
Yes, although I believe I have an adult attitude. You appreciate things more. If I was in Portugal I wouldn't think so much about these aspects. But, as I'm here, of course I think more about my family, friends, people who helped me, people who support me when things are going well, and when they're not going well, when you play and when you don't. This makes you a more mature person.

**What's it like in Munich? Do people recognise you? How do they react to you?**
Yes, they recognise me, but it's different. The Germans are calmer, they don't come up to me like in Portugal. But yes, they recognise me. It's a good relationship. Some people are embarrassed to come to me, they just look. I get on well with them and they get on well with me. I've never had any problem.

**How do you view your season so far?**
I knew the adaptation would be tough, but the answer is not to give up, to keep working hard and I know my time will come. Of course, all players want to be playing, but they can't, only 11 can, and I'm working hard so my moment will come.

**At Bayern you're earning a lot, but that doesn't seem to satisfy you...**
Of course it doesn't! I didn't come for the money. All players with ambition want to move to a better club. Benfica is a great club but it's tough for them to win the Champions League, while here you have a chance. It's about ambition. All footballers want to play for the best clubs.

**What's your relationship with Carlo Ancelotti like? Do you speak in Italian?**
It's half Italian – well, I think it's more Spanish than Italian, actually – but it's a good relationship. He speaks to me, explains things, tells me where I have to improve. I think I'm living up to his expectations and I'm getting to where he wants me to be.

**Although you're still trying to establish yourself, you frequently appear in upbeat posts on the social networks. Do you feel as comfortable with your team-mates at Bayern as you did at Benfica?**
Over time you make friends, you hit it off with some people, others not so much, but you still get on well. I joke around with the people I get on best with, for example some of my Spanish and Brazilian team-mates, like Thiago Alcantara, Rafinha, Douglas Costa, Javi Martinez. They are the ones I talk to the most, but I also get on well with Ribery and Alaba. They try to help me out, telling me that if I need anything, just ask. I got a good welcome when I arrived.

**Is the winter break beneficial for a player?**
For me it was good, because things weren't exactly going brilliantly and it was good for me to spend time with my family and friends. It was helpful because I could go back to Portugal and rest my mind.

**Would scoring a goal help you settle?**
Yes, but I think at the moment anything is important, even just winning a tackle or making an interception. A goal gives a player a big confidence boost, but it's not just a question of scoring. Inside, I'm annoyed and a bit angry because things have not started so well, but we must be patient and wait for our moment. I try to do my best every day, to be better in every game. Like I said, my moment will come.

**Is the Allianz Arena as amazing as it seems?**
Yes. The first time I played here was for Benfica. It's awesome, incredibly big. The atmosphere is like in Portugal, only here there are no flares or torches. But it's red hot, the stadium's beautiful, you see a multitude of people on the streets and your adrenalin starts to flow for the game.

**When did you first hear about Bayern's interest in you?**
Gestifute [the players' agency founded by Jorge Mendes] told me to go to the office because they needed to speak to me. I went there and they told me another very good club, Bayern Munich, has expressed an interest in me, as well as Manchester United. I thought long and hard. I went home, thought about it, but it didn't cause me anxiety. I asked my mother and the people who had helped me. I decided Bayern because it was the club that believed in me. I said "OK, I want it" and the deal was done with Benfica. I felt they had confidence in me and I liked that.

**Your transfer to Bayern cost €35million up front. Does that put added pressure on you?**
I don't see it that way. Today these kinds of deals are increasingly common. Football generates lots of money. I was 18 when the transfer was done, not many players of this age have such a fee, but over time others will happen. I don't feel uncomfortable with the transfer fee. I feel more uncomfortable not playing. Nobody can change the transfer fee, it's done. Working at a club like Bayern helps you develop. Every day that goes by I feel I'm a better player. The €35m is money well spent.

**It's enabled you to help your family...**
Of course. I'm able to give a better life to my [six] brothers, my mother and my father, and some people who helped me in the football world. I'm happy I can. It was me who played but I couldn't have done it on my own. My mother and others helped me.

*Interview by Nuno Reis/Translation by Tom Kundert*

Glenn Moore

# Stars to miss big kick-off

## New NWSL season set to get under way

Stronger than ever, but missing key players, the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) in the US embarks on a fifth season with confidence and concern.

On the credit side, the league is breaking new ground, outlasting its two predecessors and signing a notable new TV contract. It will kick off, however, without some of its most recognisable stars, including the sport's three highest profile names: Alex Morgan, Carli Lloyd and Hope Solo.

It is also breaking new ground in a literal sense as well, with New York Western Flash having relocated 500 miles south. It seems bizarre for the 2016 champions to be killed off within weeks of their greatest triumph, but attendances for the Flash averaged below 4,000 and they had struggled to find the right combination of playing and training facilities.

They have moved to Cary, near Raleigh, and will be known as North Carolina Courage – a nod to a previous female team based there – and are affiliated with North Carolina FC, a men's team with aspirations to join MLS.

The state of North Carolina has a strong history of women's football at college level but is also the subject of a partial boycott due to legislation that discriminates against some minority groups, colloquially known as the "bathroom bill", which denies access to public facilities – specifically public toilets – by transgender individuals.

Entertainers such as Bruce Springsteen have cancelled concerts and basketball's NBA All-Star game was moved from the state, but although critical of the legislation other sports have continued to play there. Women's soccer has a strong LGBT following and there was disquiet at the move, but both the club and the league have said they are opposed to the law and are working to have it repealed.

English coach Paul Riley remains in charge of the team and, while some may have had reservations, the core of last year's title winners moved with him and they will be contenders again.

Absent...Alex Morgan is on loan at Lyon

Last year's beaten finalists, however, have problems. Ali Kreiger, who was critical of Washington Spirit's owner thwarting Megan Rapinoe's "bended knee" protest at their Maryland home last season, was unexpectedly traded to Orlando Pride; Crystal Dunn, who scored both Spirit goals in the Final, crossed the Atlantic to join Chelsea; and Diana Matheson and Christine Nairn both switched to Seattle Reign. Replacements have been slow to arrive and fans are disgruntled.

Portland Thorns won the regular-season title and, with the league's largest crowds by some distance, are favourites. They may not be able to call on French midfielder Amandine Henry until June as she is on loan to Paris Saint-Germain, but they have signed Australia's Ashleigh Sykes to partner veteran Canadian striker Christine Sinclair.

> Portland Thorns won the regular-season title and, with the league's largest crowds, are favourites

The Thorns will launch the new television deal, with Lifetime TV, against Orlando Pride. This is a shrewd choice as a championship rematch of sorts, between Spirit and Courage, is the headline game of the April 15 opening programme, but the much higher attendance and greater spectacle at Providence Park makes this the best showcase. For the first time a live match will feature every week.

Pride had a typical debut season in 2016, opening their campaign in front of a league-record crowd of 23,403 and beginning brightly before fading to finish ninth in the 10-team league. Experienced Scottish coach Tom Sermanni continues at the helm, but he will have to do without Morgan until she finishes her loan spell at Lyon, which will probably end in early June after the Champions League Final. The former Australia national coach has several leading Matildas in his squad, plus US keeper Ashlyn Harris and Kreiger.

Also in Europe for the opening part of the season is back-to-back FIFA World Player of the Year Lloyd, who swapped Houston Dash for Manchester City in another loan. However, with no major tournament for the US this year, Lloyd will be available, barring injury, as often as the last two seasons, when the 2015 World Cup and 2016 Olympics intervened.

Some stars will not be back mid-season, and joining Dunn in London is Heather O'Reilly, who has left Kansas City for Arsenal after retiring from the US team with 231 caps.

Chicago Red Stars, semi-finalists last season, will look to Christen Press to score the goals and Julie Johnston to stop other teams doing so, while Costa Rica's Raquel Rodriguez and Australia's Sam Kerr are key for Sky Blue FC in New Jersey, .

Boston Breakers, reshaped with a

youthful accent by Matt Beard, will miss Whitney Engen, who has "stepped away" from the game, but England's Natasha Dowie returns full of confidence after a successful time in Australia.

Another absentee is keeper Solo, who is recuperating from a shoulder operation, but even without her and Kim Little, who has returned to Arsenal, Seattle should be in the mix.

Oddly, for a nation so established in the sport, Seattle's Laura Harvey is the only female coach. Harvey has twice won the regular season Shield with Reign, but the Championship Final has eluded her.

It would do women's coaching good if she finally reached the summit this term. WS

**Championship...Abby Dahlkemper (left) of Western New York Flash and Washington Spirit's Francisca Ordega**

*National Women's Soccer League 2017*

**1** Boston Breakers
**2** Chicago Red Stars
**3** Houston Dash
**4** Kansas City
**5** North Carolina Courage
**6** Orlando Pride
**7** Portland Thorns
**8** Seattle Reign
**9** Sky Blue
**10** Washington Spirit

# Round-up

**Kiwi captain...Abby Erceg**

### SKIPPER QUITS FOOTBALL FERNS IN PROTEST

Abby Erceg, New Zealand's captain, retired from international football at the age of 27 in protest at funding cuts brought on by the Kiwis' failure to escape the Rio 2016 group stage. This meant players will no longer be paid an allowance on international duty. Erceg, who won 130 caps and plays professionally in the US, said: "I will be stepping back in the hope to create change for the current and future generations of NZ footballers."

### BELL AND BOANAS SIGN UP

Colin Bell, the only Englishman to coach a Champions League-winning side of either gender – while with Frankfurt in 2015 – has left German club Sand to manage the Republic of Ireland. Making a reverse move from international football to domestic is Keith Boanas, the former Estonia coach, who has taken over at Watford, of WSL2. The arrival of Boanas, who won the Women's FA Cup at Charlton, was a lift after the club scratched from an FA Cup tie with Doncaster.

### AULAS FINES SEXIST FANS

Lyon owner Jean-Michel Aulas has fined fans who displayed banners at Parc OL indicating men should go to the stadium and women to the kitchen. OL's women's team sometimes plays at Parc OL.

Aulas is also set to replace Gerard Precheur, despite the coach being on course to repeat last season's double of Champions League and French title.

This follows reports of tensions over selection with Aulas, with the latter saying: "With such an international squad we really need someone who has a total command of English".

**Support...Lyon owner Jean-Michel Aulas**

**Lift...new Watford coach Keith Boanas**

### SPORTING BREAK BRAGA AND RECORD IN LISBON

A record crowd for a women's match in Portugal of 9,263 saw Sporting beat leaders Braga with a 94th-minute penalty to take over the league summit. The match was played in the Estadio Jose Alvalade in Lisbon with free admission.

### EASTERN WIN IN INDIA

The inaugural Indian Women's League was won by Eastern Sporting Union from Manipur, close to the Myanmar border. With the women's game well-established in the region their success – a 3-0 win against Rising Student's Club, from Odisha in Delhi – was unsurprising.

The IWL is seen as the platform to target a first World Cup for either sex. At 54th in the world India's women are ranked 76 places above the men.

SYRIA

# Derby day in Aleppo

Football returns to the Syrian capital with a game between local sides Al Hurriya and Al Ittihad

Loyal...supporters of Al Hurriya

Momentous...the players make their way to the pitch ahead of the Syrian Premier League game

Venue...the Riayat Al Shabab stadium in Aleppo

Crowd...there is a decent turnout for the game between Al Hurriya and Al Ittihad

Support...Al Ittihad fans

Warm-up...Al Ittihad players acknowledge the crowd

Historic...this is the first derby game in Aleppo for five years

Attack...Al Hurriya (in black) clear their lines

President...a portrait of Bashar Al Assad hangs in the stadium

Safe...Al Ittihad are denied once more

Security...Syrian police in riot gear watch from the sidelines

Together...Al Ittihad went on to win 2-1

World Soccer vintage 34 years ago

# April 1983

## Club-versus-country row angers Portugal coach

Michel Platini of France was on the front cover of *World Soccer*, a year ahead of his country's hosting of the 1984 European Championship, and *Les Bleus* would go on to triumph on home soil, beating Spain in the Final after narrowly squeezing past Portugal in the semis.

In the build-up to the Euros, Portugal lost 3-0 to France in February 1983 and were left fearing the worst a week later, with a squad decimated by withdrawals, due to face West Germany.

"The vexed question of club versus country reached an explosive head on the eve of Portugal's Lisbon friendly against West Germany," wrote Jose Rio Fernandes, "with Benfica and Sporting pulling almost all their players out of the match."

**Revolt...Portugal lost several key players before a friendly against West Germany**

As Fernandes explained: "It was the proximity of these friendlies which provoked the row. Benfica and Sporting, both in the European club quarter-finals, were furious that their men were being committed to six matches in 17 days."

And the absence of key individuals from the two Lisbon clubs left veteran coach Otto Gloria furious.

"Gloria handed the federation his resignation," continued Fernandes, "refusing even to name reserves to make up the squads."

Gloria was eventually persuaded to stay in charge for the West Germany game. "But," wrote Fernandes, "as the man who said 'how can I work in this madhouse?', Gloria will want guarantees about future player availability before he commits himself to a federation so plainly at the mercy of two clubs – Benfica and Sporting – both of whom are split by violent wrangling at boardroom level."

Gloria was in charge of the side that lost to England in the 1966 World Cup semi-finals and seen as the best man to guide Portugal to their first major finals since.

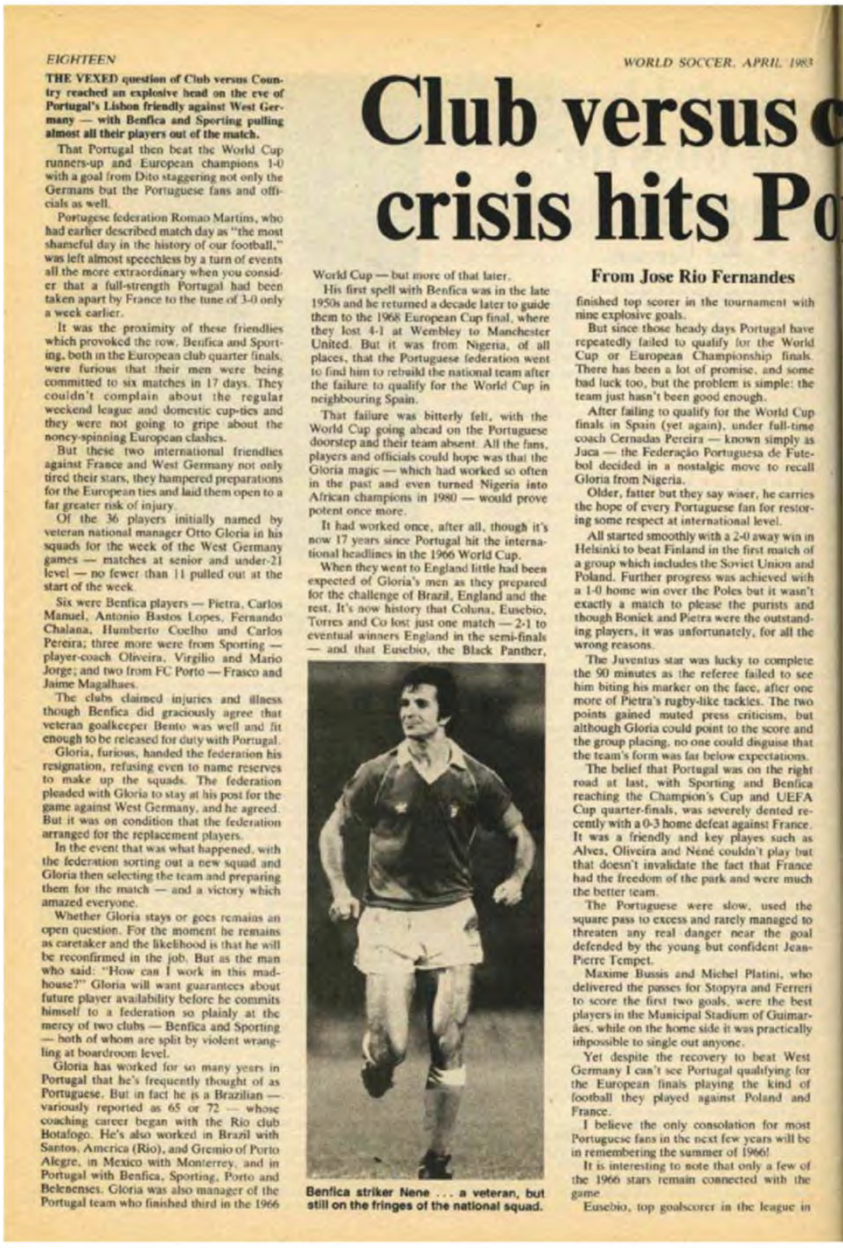
"Older, fatter but they say wiser, he carries the hope of every Portuguese fan for restoring some respect at international level," according to Fernandes.

Wins against Finland and Poland had set them up nicely in their Euro 84 qualifying group, which also included the Soviet Union. After the friendly loss to France, Gloria's under-strength side actually won 1-0 against West Germany, but Fernandes remained unconvinced.

"Despite the recovery to beat West Germany, I can't see Portugal qualifying for the European finals playing the kind of football they played against Poland and France," he argued. "This latest instance of club/country trouble is far from the first and will not be the last. The federation are powerless because any attempt to ban players from the national squad would suit the clubs down to the ground.

"They would be far happier without the regular inconvenience of losing their players to the national team for training and matches. As Benfica and Sporting have just proved." WS

**Older, fatter but they say wiser, [Otto Gloria] carries the hope of every Portuguese fan for restoring some respect at international level**



EIGHTEEN

WORLD SOCCER, APRIL 1983

**THE VEXED question of Club versus Country reached an explosive head on the eve of Portugal's Lisbon friendly against West Germany — with Benfica and Sporting pulling almost all their players out of the match.**

# Club versus c
# crisis hits Po

**From Jose Rio Fernandes**

That Portugal then beat the World Cup runners-up and European champions 1-0 with a goal from Dito staggering not only the Germans but the Portuguese fans and officials as well.

Portugese federation Romao Martins, who had earlier described match day as "the most shameful day in the history of our football," was left almost speechless by a turn of events all the more extraordinary when you consider that a full-strength Portugal had been taken apart by France to the tune of 3-0 only a week earlier.

It was the proximity of these friendlies which provoked the row. Benfica and Sporting, both in the European club quarter finals, were furious that their men were being committed to six matches in 17 days. They couldn't complain about the regular weekend league and domestic cup-ties and they were not going to gripe about the money-spinning European clashes.

But these two international friendlies against France and West Germany not only tired their stars, they hampered preparations for the European ties and laid them open to a far greater risk of injury.

Of the 36 players initially named by veteran national manager Otto Gloria in his squads for the week of the West Germany games — matches at senior and under-21 level — no fewer than 11 pulled out at the start of the week.

Six were Benfica players — Pietra, Carlos Manuel, Antonio Bastos Lopes, Fernando Chalana, Humberto Coelho and Carlos Pereira; three more were from Sporting — player-coach Oliveira, Virgilio and Mario Jorge; and two from FC Porto — Frasco and Jaime Magalhaes.

The clubs claimed injuries and illness though Benfica did graciously agree that veteran goalkeeper Bento was well and fit enough to be released for duty with Portugal.

Gloria, furious, handed the federation his resignation, refusing even to name reserves to make up the squads. The federation pleaded with Gloria to stay at his post for the game against West Germany, and he agreed. But it was on condition that the federation arranged for the replacement players.

In the event that was what happened, with the federation sorting out a new squad and Gloria then selecting the team and preparing them for the match — and a victory which amazed everyone.

Whether Gloria stays or goes remains an open question. For the moment he remains as caretaker and the likelihood is that he will be reconfirmed in the job. But as the man who said: "How can I work in this madhouse?" Gloria will want guarantees about future player availability before he commits himself to a federation so plainly at the mercy of two clubs — Benfica and Sporting — both of whom are split by violent wrangling at boardroom level.

Gloria has worked for so many years in Portugal that he's frequently thought of as Portuguese. But in fact he is a Brazilian — variously reported as 65 or 72 — whose coaching career began with the Rio club Botafogo. He's also worked in Brazil with Santos, America (Rio), and Gremio of Porto Alegre, in Mexico with Monterrey, and in Portugal with Benfica, Sporting, Porto and Belenenses. Gloria was also manager of the Portugal team who finished third in the 1966 World Cup — but more of that later.

His first spell with Benfica was in the late 1950s and he returned a decade later to guide them to the 1968 European Cup final, where they lost 4-1 at Wembley to Manchester United. But it was from Nigeria, of all places, that the Portuguese federation went to find him to rebuild the national team after the failure to qualify for the World Cup in neighbouring Spain.

That failure was bitterly felt, with the World Cup going ahead on the Portuguese doorstep and their team absent. All the fans, players and officials could hope was that the Gloria magic — which had worked so often in the past and even turned Nigeria into African champions in 1980 — would prove potent once more.

It had worked once, after all, though it's now 17 years since Portugal hit the international headlines in the 1966 World Cup.

When they went to England little had been expected of Gloria's men as they prepared for the challenge of Brazil, England and the rest. It's now history that Coluna, Eusebio, Torres and Co lost just one match — 2-1 to eventual winners England in the semi-finals — and that Eusebio, the Black Panther, finished top scorer in the tournament with nine explosive goals.

But since those heady days Portugal have repeatedly failed to qualify for the World Cup or European Championship finals. There has been a lot of promise, and some bad luck too, but the problem is simple: the team just hasn't been good enough.

After failing to qualify for the World Cup finals in Spain (yet again), under full-time coach Cernadas Pereira — known simply as Juca — the Federação Portuguesa de Futebol decided in a nostalgic move to recall Gloria from Nigeria.

Older, fatter but they say wiser, he carries the hope of every Portuguese fan for restoring some respect at international level.

All started smoothly with a 2-0 away win in Helsinki to beat Finland in the first match of a group which includes the Soviet Union and Poland. Further progress was achieved with a 1-0 home win over the Poles but it wasn't exactly a match to please the purists and though Boniek and Pietra were the outstanding players, it was unfortunately, for all the wrong reasons.

The Juventus star was lucky to complete the 90 minutes as the referee failed to see him biting his marker on the face, after one more of Pietra's rugby-like tackles. The two points gained muted press criticism, but although Gloria could point to the score and the group placing, no one could disguise that the team's form was far below expectations.

The belief that Portugal was on the right road at last, with Sporting and Benfica reaching the Champion's Cup and UEFA Cup quarter-finals, was severely dented recently with a 0-3 home defeat against France. It was a friendly and key playes such as Alves, Oliveira and Néné couldn't play but that doesn't invalidate the fact that France had the freedom of the park and were much the better team.

The Portuguese were slow, used the square pass to excess and rarely managed to threaten any real danger near the goal defended by the young but confident Jean-Pierre Tempet.

Maxime Bussis and Michel Platini, who delivered the passes for Stopyra and Ferreri to score the first two goals, were the best players in the Municipal Stadium of Guimarães, while on the home side it was practically impossible to single out anyone.

Yet despite the recovery to beat West Germany I can't see Portugal qualifying for the European finals playing the kind of football they played against Poland and France.

I believe the only consolation for most Portuguese fans in the next few years will be in remembering the summer of 1966!

It is interesting to note that only a few of the 1966 stars remain connected with the game.

Eusebio, top goalscorer in the league in

Benfica striker Nene ... a veteran, but still on the fringes of the national squad.

WORLD SOCCER, APRIL 1983 NINETEEN

# ountry
# rtugal

1964-1968, 1970 and 1973 — once with 42 goals in the 26 matches (an average of more than three goals in two games) — was tempted by the dollar and helped Vancouver Whitecaps to the Soccer Bowl in 1976. Back in Portugal, wealthier but older, he played for a season with Northern second division club Beira-Mar before finally hanging up his boots. Nowadays he is the coach to the Benfica under-15s.

José Augusto, a gifted and intelligent right-winger, was Benfica's assistant-manager for several years after retiring.

Later appointed to assist with the national team, he helped Juca with the under-21s and is now in charge of the youth team.

The giant centre-forward Jose Torres, an ideal partner for the explosive Eusebio up-front, was the last of the 22 in England to retire. After some more years with Benfica (and Eusebio) he played for Setubal and Estoril, being player-manager with this first division club for two seasons and just manager last year. Proving a good motivator and fine tactitian, he attracted the attention of several clubs last summer and is now doing a good job with Varzim, as the club's position in the top six testifies.

Coluna, the 1966 midfield maestro and a player as influencial as Eusebio, also from Benfica, retired a few years after the World Cup and after several ventures into management without much real success, travelled back to his native Mozambique where he is now the national coach.

Eusebio, Jose Augusto, Coluña and Torres all played for Benfica who have — with Sporting and Porto — dominated Portuguese football since its early days.

The 'three greats' (in that order), have won all the league titles except one — which fell in 1946 to Belenenses (this year in the second division for the first time in their history). The Lisbon Eagles (Benfica) have never finished below fourth in the league, the Lions (Sporting) have never known a final place below fifth, while the Oporto outfit slipped below seventh only once.

The Cup, launched in 1921-22, and which wasn't run in 1946-47 and 1949-50, has always been regarded very much as second in importance to the league title and has thus been a little more favourable for the 'minnows'. Benfica have won 17 of the 41 contests, Sporting 11, FC Porto four, Boavista three, Belenenses and Setubal two, Academica and Leixoès one each.

Further indications of this three-club monopoly can be seen by their stadium capacities. Benfica's Estadio da Luz (Lights Stadium) and Sporting's Alvalade have a 75,000 capacity and FC Porto's Antas can hold 70,000. Next is Braga's 1st of May Stadium, able to hold 40,000 but the average of the other 12 clubs' stadia (if that is the right description for some of the 'fields' in use) is 21,000. One of them, Campu Engenheiro Vidal Pindeiro of newly promoted Salgueiros is full with just 11,000 people!

Benfica midfielder Joao Alves . . . famous for those black gloves.

Only Benfica and Sporting have had any real success in Europe. The Eagles reached the 1961, 1962, 1963, 1965 and 1968 Champions' Cup finals, defeating Barcelona 3-2 in 1961 and Real Madrid 5-3 in 1962 in the days of Costa Pereira, Coluña, Torres and Eusebio. They lost the other finals to Milan (1-2), Inter (0-1) and Manchester United (1-4 after extra time). Sporting won the Cup-winners' Cup in 1964, beating MTK of Budapest 1-0 in a replay, and reached the semi-finals of the same competition ten years later.

A curious aspect of Portuguese domestic football is that only one foreigner is allowed to play per team but Brazilians, due to special statue, are not regarded as foreigners! As a result there are 37 Brazilians in the first division. Then the former colonies of Guiné-Bissau, San Tome, Angola and Mozambique provide 36 players.

The 'only' foreigners then are Hungary goalkeeper Ferenc Meszaros (Sporting), Yugoslavia centre-forward Zoran Filipovic (Benfica), Ireland forward Mickey Walsh (FC Porto), Swdeish newcomer Glenn Stromberg (Benfica) and one Uruguayan, Two Argentines, one Venezuelan and one Nigerian.

As for coaches, all the three 'greats' had foreigners last year: Hungarian Lajos Baroti at Benfica, Englishman Malcolm Allison at Sporting and Austrian Hermann Stessl at FC Porto. This season now there's only one coach from abroad among the entire 16 club first division: Benfica's Swedish Sven-Goran Eriksson.

The league is organised with three national divisions and three-other regional. The first division, first organised in 1934 (11 years after the Cup) has 16 clubs playing 30 matches, with the last three being relegated. The second division is regionally divided in North, Centre and South, with 16 teams in each group, competing for a single promotion post and a second place which provides entry to the 'Liguinha' (mini-league) against the team finishing fourth from bottom of the first division for the right to a spot in the first. The third division is divided in six sections, with the top teams being promoted to the second.

The respective leaders in the second division (North, Centre and South) are Penafiel, Agueda and Farense. But there are no prizes for guessing the top three in the first division. Benfica led after 21 games with 36 points, four clear of Porto and five ahead of Sporting.

Top scorer — in Europe as well as in Portugal — was Gomes of Porto with 27, followed by Nene (Benfica) 16, N'Habola (Rio Ave) with 15 and Jordao (Sporting) with 14. The only other two men to reach double figures were imports: Benfica's Filipovic with 13 and Porto's Walsh with 12.

All of which emphasises the three-club domination in Portugal. And explains also why the national team will continue to come second best when club interests are at stake.

This latest instance of club/country trouble is far from the first and will not be the last. The federation are powerless because any attempt to ban players from the national squad would suit the clubs down to the ground.

They would be far happier **without** the regular inconvenience of losing their players to the national team for training and matches.

As Benfica and Sporting have just proved.

## Also in this issue...

**p3** It was the end of an era for English clubs in the European Cup, as holders Aston Villa lost in the quarter-finals to Juventus and English champions Liverpool fell at the same stage to Polish side Widzew Lodz. *World Soccer* commented: "After six years in which the most prestigious of club trophies has been passed between Liverpool, Nottingham Forest, Liverpool again and Aston Villa, the party is now over."

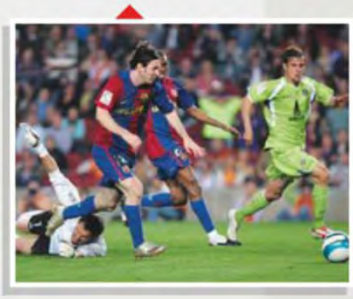
**p12-13** Eric Weil reported on the fast-rising champions of Chile, explaining: "Cobreloa are one of the most successful clubs on the continent today. They are also unique in South America because they are run by a copper mine – the Chuquicamata mine, which is one of the largest in the world – mostly with deductions from pay packets from the miners who, because of shift work, can however see their team only once a month."

**p34** In Belgium, Philip Smith reported on the sacking of four coaches and an incident in the Lokeren v RWD Molenbeek cup tie. He wrote: "Lokeren's Maurice De Schrijver was tackled by his friend and international colleague Michel De Wolf. The resounding clash of the two sweepers was heard all round the stadium and the Lokeren player, who nine months ago lined up for Belgium against Argentina, collapsed in a pathetic heap. It will be a minor miracle if the 32-year-old will ever be able to resume his first-class career."

**p36** Commenting on Rhodes' Greek top-flight clash with AEK, in which there were several red cards and injuries, Lou Economopoulos reported: "By the 80th minute, there were only six Rhodes players left on the field and referee Nikos Kapetanakis stopped the match with AEK leading 2-1, as rules say that with less than seven players the team must forfeit the match."

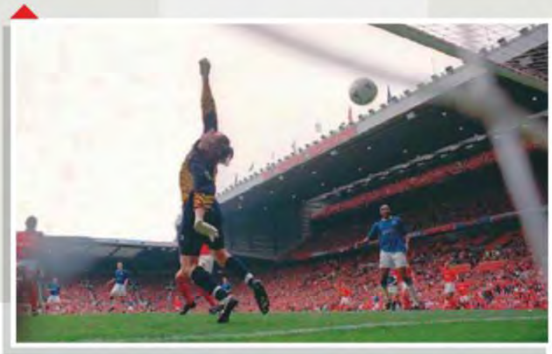
### 10 years ago

Barcelona's Lionel Messi goes on a dazzling run and scores a wonderful individual effort against Getafe in La Liga that is a carbon copy of fellow countryman Diego Maradona's second goal for Argentina against England at the 1986 World Cup finals.



### 20 years ago

Despite his shot crossing the line, Jonathan Howard's effort for Chesterfield is ruled out against Middlesbrough with the third-tier side leading 2-1 in the FA Cup semi-finals with 21 minutes remaining. The match eventually finishes 3-3, with the top-flight side winning the replay 3-0.



### 30 years ago

In the wake of fan protests following a 1-1 draw with Ascoli, Roma coach Sven Goran Eriksson offers his resignation, which is rejected by the club's hierarchy. Elsewhere in Italy, Internazionale cool their interest in signing Real Madrid's Hugo Sanchez.

### 40 years ago

Due to return to duty with the Dutch air force, Jan Zwartkruis is given an extra year off to coach Holland and guide his country to the 1978 World Cup finals. Meanwhile, Sepp Herberger, who led West Germany to victory in the 1954 World Cup, dies at the age of 80.

### 50 years ago

Scotland beat England 3-2 at Wembley to inflict a first defeat on Alf Ramsey's team since they won the World Cup. Only Roger Hunt is missing from the side that triumphed in 1966, but goals from Denis Law, Bobby Lennox and Jim McCalliog leave the Scots victorious.

MISCELLANEOUS

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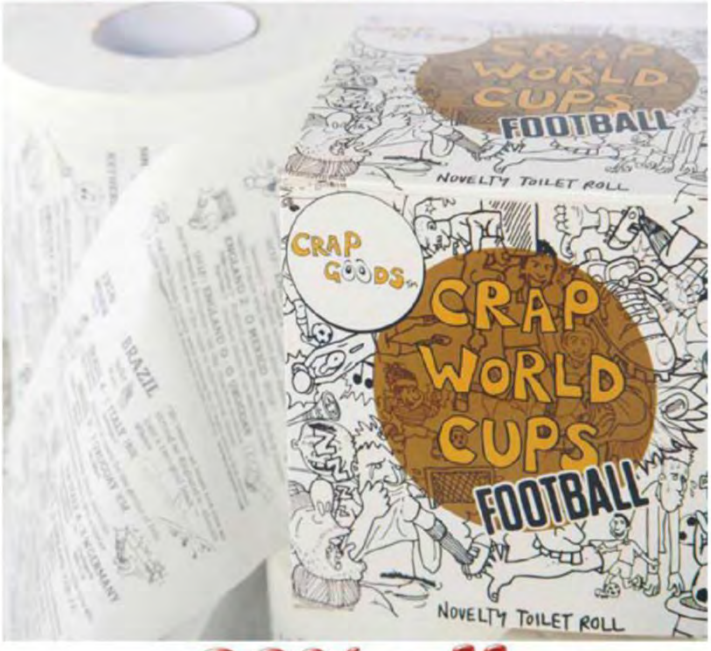


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# World Service

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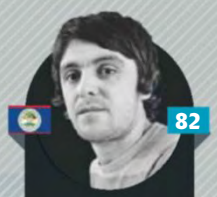


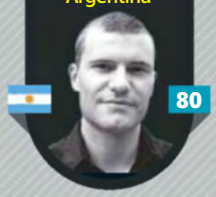
**BRYAN KAY** — Belize — 82

**GEOFF MORTIMORE** — Sweden — 72

**NICK BIDWELL** — Germany — 76

**TIM VICKERY** — Brazil — 78

**JOEL RICHARDS** — Argentina — 80



**PADDY AGNEW** — Italy — 75

84

PLUS

On target...Robert Lewandowski scores again


**DIARY**

74 Comprehensive global news

**RESULTS, TABLES, FIXTURES**

84 ESM Golden Shoe
85 Internationals
86 Club

**SQUADS**

87 MLS

87

Kick-off...Seattle Sounders (in white) take on Montreal Impact

Sweden

GEOFF MORTIMORE

# Malmo still the team to beat

## Defending champions seek fourth title in five years

While Malmo will kick off this year's Allsvenskan as favourites once again, there is more than enough intrigue in the Swedish top flight to make this one of the most anticipated campaigns in years.

Winners in three of the past four campaigns, the defending champions' capture of Swedish international Behrang Safari from Basle was a clear indication of their intentions, as was the arrival of Danish centre-back Lasse Nielsen from Gent.

For long periods last year IFK Gothenburg looked like Malmo's stiffest opposition, but question marks remain over their recruitment policy since they fell away last term and the signs were hardly promising as they capitulated against Norrkoping in the Swedish Cup, the competition that traditionally takes place before the league season kicks off.

Financial problems also continue to dog the club, although the loan signing of New York City's Norwegian-born American international Mix Diskerud has lifted spirits, if not IFK's chances of fighting for the big prize.

Of the Stockholm sides, AIK look the best bet for bringing the title back to the capital. There were signs of progress last time out, and despite the sale of teenage prodigy Alexander Isak to Borussia Dortmund they have potential. Isak played just 24 times for AIK, so it is hard to gauge what impact his departure will have on the team this year, while Chinedu Obasi's move to Shenzhen in the Chinese second tier is another big loss.

In their place come Bosnian striker Sulejman Krpic from Sloboda Tuzla and former crowd favourite Henok Goitom, who returns after spells at Getafe and San Jose Earthquakes. The addition of national under-21 captain Kristoffer Olsson from Midtjylland could well mean AIK provide an even greater threat than last term.

Neighbours Djurgarden are an unknown quantity under new coach Ozcan Melkemichel and the big question here is what kind of effect the return of Kim Kallstrom will have. It may surprise Arsenal fans to hear what a big deal the 34-year-old's signing is, but with season ticket sales healthy and the club website crashing under the strain after the announcement of his return, there is little doubt it has sparked a feeling of real optimism around the club.

The other Stockholm side, Hammarby, have achieved top-flight stability with successive 11th-place finishes after a turbulent few years. However, they were disappointing in pre-season under new Danish coach Jakob Michelsen and made a tame exit in the group phase of the Swedish Cup. They will be hoping that the addition of former Malmo and Hoffenheim midfielder Jiloan Hamad will improve matters.

Promoted from the Superettan last year were Halmstad, Sirius and, most interestingly of all, AFC United, a club that didn't even exist a few years ago. To cut a long story short,

**Impressive... Ostersund's English coach Graham Potter**

**Champions...Malmo last year**

> "The owners told me at the time they had a vision of reaching the top flight and eventually getting into Europe"
>
> Graham Potter on joining Ostersund, who were then in the fourth tier

Preview

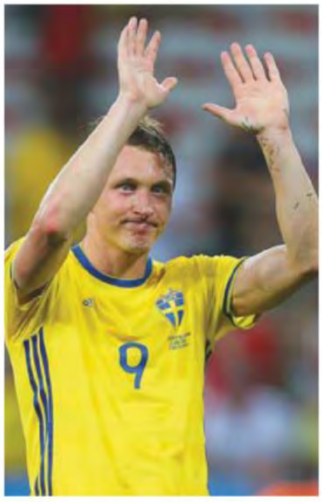
## ALLSVENSKAN 2017

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | AFC Eskilstuna |
| 2 | AIK (Stockholm) |
| | Djurgardens IF |
| | Hammarby IF |
| 3 | BK Hacken (Gothenburg) |
| | IFK Gothenburg |
| 4 | GIF Sundsvall |
| 5 | Halmstads BK |
| 6 | IF Elfsborg (Boras) |
| 7 | IFK Norrkoping |
| 8 | IK Sirius (Uppsala) |
| 9 | Jonkopings Sodra IF |
| 10 | Kalmar FF |
| 11 | Malmo FF |
| 12 | Orebro SK |
| 13 | Ostersunds FK |

Vasby United – who used to be a feeder club to AIK – were merged with Athletic FC to form AFC United. Without a proper home, AFC have relocated to Eskilstuna, some 100 miles away from their Stockholm roots, in the hope of finding a new fan base and will now be known as AFC Eskilstuna. Former Djurgarden coach Pelle Olsson was drafted in just before Christmas with promotion confirmed, but things haven't started well in pre-season. How quickly they get used to the tempo of a higher level in the first few rounds of the Allsvenskan may ultimately decide their survival chances. The recruitment of former Arsenal midfielder Emmanuel Frimpong has caught the imagination though.

Superettan champions last year, Sirius from Uppsala face a tough task, while there is a general feeling that although Halmstad have had a few lean years recently, and only came up in third place, their recent experience of top-flight football could be vital to their chances of survival. However, a 7-0 defeat by Norrkoping in the Swedish Cup underlined just how much they will need to do to make up the gap in quality.

All the new boys will all be hoping to follow the blueprint set by Ostersund, who reached the top tier for the first time in their history a year ago and quickly secured safety, finishing in a more than creditable eighth place. As a result, their English coach Graham Potter was named coach of the year.



**Optimism...Djurgarden's Kim Kallstrom**

The former Stoke City and Birmingham City defender has done an astonishing job since arriving in 2010, when the tiny northern club had dropped to the fourth tier. "There was a lot of negativity around, and the quality at that level was poor, but the owners told me at the time they had a vision of reaching the top flight and eventually getting into Europe," says Potter.

As outlandish as it sounded then, seven years and four promotions later Potter's reputation has risen in tandem with that of the club, with the transformation having been managed off the pitch as well as on it. Having completed a degree in social sciences and a master's in leadership and emotional intelligence after his playing career ended, he has worked hard on integrating the team in the community and it has paid great dividends on both sides.

After a successful run in the Swedish Cup, many pundits are tipping a top-six place, although Potter is wary of second-season syndrome and argues: "I'm enjoying it here and we know we have a lot of things in place, but it's important not to make too many predictions. Our recruitment policy has proved to be a success and I just tell the players we have to play for every point and see where it takes us." WS

FEBRUARY 15-MARCH 17, 2017

# Global diary

*A comprehensive record of recent events around the world*

## Wednesday February 15

**FRANCE:** Lille dismiss interim boss Patrick Collot and replace him with Franck Passi until the end of the season. Monaco bid to buy Belgian second-tier side Cercle Bruges.
**GERMANY:** Bayern Munich thrash Arsenal 5-1 for a second successive season and record their 16th straight home win in the Champions League.
**LAOS:** The AFC bans 22 people from Laos and Cambodia for life, including 15 current or former players, for the manipulation of games involving Laos representative teams and club side Lao Toyota.
**SCOTLAND:** Lee Clark quits as manager of Kilmarnock, with the side sixth in the Premiership, to take charge of English third-tier side Bury.
**SPAIN:** Real Madrid come from a goal down to win 3-1 and end Napoli's 18-game unbeaten run.
**TURKEY:** The day after sacking Jan Olde Riekerink, Galatasaray appoint former Juventus and Croatia defender Igor Tudor as coach on a one-and-a-half-year contract.

## Thursday February 16

**GERMANY:** Klaas-Jan Huntelaar scores his 50th goal in European club competition as Schalke win 3-0 at PAOK in the Europa League.
**ITALY:** Edin Dzeko gets his second Europa League hat-trick of the season as Roma beat Villarreal 4-0 in Spain.
**SPAIN:** A judge in Pamplona rules that former Real Betis players Xavier Torres, Antonio Amaya and Jordi Figueras will stand trial, along with 15 others, for attempted match-fixing at the end of the 2013-14 season.

## Friday February 17

**ITALY:** Five years after he led Pescara to the Serie B title, Zdenek Zeman is re-hired as coach by the club who are bottom of Serie A.
**QATAR:** Former Manchester United striker Dwight Yorke is barred from boarding a flight set to go via Miami because he has an Iranian stamp in his passport after playing in a charity match in Tehran in 2015.

## Saturday February 18

**AUSTRALIA:** Western Sydney Wanderers win their local derby for the first time in 10 attempts as they inflict Sydney's first A-League defeat of the season with a 1-0 win.
**ENGLAND:** Lincoln City win 1-0 at Burnley and become the first non-league club to reach the last eight of the FA Cup in 103 years. Leicester City go out to third-tier opposition, losing 1-0 at Millwall.
**FRANCE:** Mario Balotelli is sent off for the third time this season as Nice win 1-0 at bottom club Lorient.
**NORTHERN IRELAND:** Ballymena United beat Carrick Rangers 2-0 to win the League Cup for the first time.
**SOUTH AFRICA:** A late goal by centre-back Ricardo Nascimento gives Mamelodi Sundowns a 1-0 victory over TP Mazembe of DR Congo in the CAF Super Cup.
**SPAIN:** Substitute Kevin Gameiro scores the second-fastest hat-trick in Liga history, in four minutes and 45 seconds, as Atletico Madrid win 4-1 at Sporting Gijon. Gareth Bale scores after almost three months out with an ankle injury as Real Madrid beat Espanyol 2-0.

Triumph...Mamelodi Sundowns with the CAF Super Cup

## Sunday February 19

**BRAZIL:** A state championship game between Atletico PR and Coritiba is called off shortly before kick-off in a row over TV rights. Unhappy at the money on offer, the clubs tried to broadcast the game themselves but were barred from doing so and the game was postponed.
**ENGLAND:** Harry Kane scores a hat-trick as Tottenham Hotspur win 3-0 at Fulham in the FA Cup.
**FRANCE:** Former Marseille boss Marcelo Bielsa agrees to take charge of Lille next season.
**GREECE:** AEK beat league leaders Olympiakos 1-0 in an ill-tempered game that sees 12 yellow cards and two dismissals.
**ITALY:** Edin Dzeko becomes the first player to score in eight consecutive games for Roma, in all competitions, as they beat Torino 4-1. Zdenek Zeman makes an immediate impact at Pescara, who win 5-0 against Genoa – a result that costs opposite number Ivan Juric his job.
**SPAIN:** Former Real Madrid and Barcelona defender Alfonso Perez says Gerard Pique should make himself unavailable for international duty due to his political beliefs over

Upset...Sean Raggett of Lincoln City scores the non-league club's winning goal away at Premier League side Burnley in the FA Cup

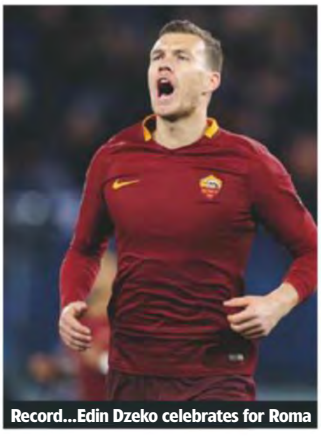
independence for Catalonia. Ernesto Valverde sets a club record with his 290th game as coach of Athletic Bilbao, who lose 2-0 to Valencia.

## Monday February 20

**EGYPT:** A court upholds the death sentences for 10 men for their part in the violence that left 74 fans dead after the game between Al Masry and Al Ahly at Port Said in 2012.
**IRAN:** Esteghlal Khouzestan kick off the AFC Champions League group stage with a 1-0 victory over Saudi Arabia's Al Fateh.

## Tuesday February 21

**ENGLAND:** Manchester City twice come from behind to beat Atletico Madrid 5-3 in the Champions League round-of-16 first leg.
**NEW CALEDONIA:** A 3-2 victory over Solomon Islands in the OFC Under-17 Championship in Tahiti means New Caledonia will join New Zealand in the Under-17 World Cup in India later this year – their ➤



Record...Edin Dzeko celebrates for Roma

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW

# Stirring times for Roma

## Chasing Juve and building for the future

Heading into March, Roma sat second to Juventus in Serie A after a run of seven wins in eight games and were through to the last 16 of the Europa League. And yet their best result of the season so far arguably came at City Hall rather than on the pitch.

That came when the mayor of Rome, Virginia Raggi, gave a qualified "green light" to the club's ambitious plans to build their own stadium on the site of the former racecourse of Tor di Valle, in the south-west of the city on the banks of the Tiber.

Roma's US ownership, led by James Pallotta, has long argued that this project is absolutely crucial for the club's future financial well being. Yet there have been moments recently it has seemed possible that Mayor Raggi of the Five Star Movement (M5S) – which comes from a background of grass-roots activism linked to environmentalist issues – would cancel the whole project as City Hall seemed to be backtracking on agreements arrived at between the club and the previous mayor, Ignazio Marino.

In its current form, the project has been around since 2012, when Roma president Pallotta and building tycoon Luca Parnasi signed their first agreement for the stadium to be built at Tor di Valle. Since then, there has been a lot of talk, various presentations and a good deal of speculation, but no new stadium.

The 52,500-capacity structure was intended to be a "state of the art" arena that would combine 356-days-a-year modern amenities and technology with an intimate pitch that would allow Roma fans to be close to the action. But while that all sounds fine, many critics – particularly within the M5S – were suspicious that the whole project was more about building speculation than about creating a new home for Roma.

The stadium issue almost split the party, with many of the M5S faithful calling on Mayor Raggi to block the development. Eventually, after a tense last-minute meeting, she gave the go-ahead – but only to a greatly "re-dimensioned" version of the plan.

In theory, the new stadium project is still up and running; in practice, there are a myriad of problems still to be surmounted. For example, it has been argued that the new, slimmed-down version is destined for enormous traffic-flow problems. And then there is the Lazio president, Claudio Lotito, who has complained: "Dear Mayor Raggi, we notice your administration has overcome the [environmental] problems and reached an agreement with Roma for the construction of a new stadium...We now expect you to afford equal treatment to the many Lazio fans and allow Lazio to build their own new stadium."

> "We now expect you to afford equal treatment to the many Lazio fans and allow Lazio to build their own new stadium"
>
> Lazio president Claudio Lotito's message to the Mayor of Rome

In truth, there is nothing new about Lotito's plan for a Lazio stadium, having proposed one at Valmontone, some 45km south of Rome, as far back as 2007, and in more recent times he has moved his preferred site much closer to the city. And if he revives his plans it will be hard to deny him, if and when a new Roma stadium has been built.

That, however, is for the future. WS

Plan...how the new Stadio della Roma might look

➤ first-ever FIFA finals tournament.
**SPAIN:** Antoine Griezmann scores in a 4-2 win at Bayer Leverkusen and becomes Atletico Madrid's all-time record scorer in the Champions League/European Cup with 13 goals.

### Wednesday February 22

**BRAZIL:** Second-half substitute goalkeeper Roberto Fernandez saves three spot-kicks as Botafogo beat Olimpia of Paraguay on penalties to reach the group stage of the Libertadores Cup.
**HONG KONG:** Eastern – whose coach Chan Yuen-ting is the first woman to lead a men's team in a continental competition – lose 7-0 to China's Guangzhou Evergrande in the AFC Champions League.
**PORTUGAL:** Alex Telles is sent off in the 27th minute as Porto lose 2-0 at home to Juventus in the Champions League.
**RUSSIA:** Krasnodar celebrate the eighth anniversary of their founding by reaching the last 16 of the Europa League for the first time with a 2-1 aggregate triumph over Fenerbahce.
**SCOTLAND:** Holders Hibernian beat Edinburgh rivals Hearts 3-1 in their Scottish Cup replay.
**SPAIN:** Joaquin Correa misses an early penalty but Sevilla still beat Leicester City 2-1 in the Champions League. In La Liga, Real Madrid lose 2-1 at Valencia.

### Thursday February 23

**BELGIUM:** A last-minute goal from Isaac Kiese Thelin puts Anderlecht in the last 16 of the Europa League on away goals after a 3-3 aggregate draw with Russian side Zenit.
**ENGLAND:** Defending Premier League champions Leicester City sack manager Claudio Ranieri. Tottenham Hotspur draw 2-2 with Gent at Wembley in front of a record Europa League crowd of 80,465.
**FRANCE:** Lyon beat Dutch side AZ 11-2 on aggregate to equal the Europa League record of 13 goals in a single tie.
**GERMANY:** Trailing 3-0 on aggregate just before half-time in their second-leg tie in Italy, Lars Stindl grabs a hat-trick against Fiorentina as Borussia Monchengladbach come back to win the Europa League tie 4-3.

### Friday February 24

**FRANCE:** Mickael Le Bihan scores twice on his return after 17 months out with a broken leg as Nice beat Montpellier 2-1.
**NEW ZEALAND:** A 7-0 victory against New Caledonia in the Final gives New Zealand a sixth ➤

## Germany

NICK BIDWELL

# Schmidt time over at Leverkusen

Caretaker coach Korkut takes charge at BayArena

Strange how many coaches were fired or had their grip on power loosened by first-leg defeats in the Champions League round of 16: Claudio Ranieri biting the dust at Leicester City, Luis Enrique announcing his forthcoming departure from Barcelona, the future of Arsene Wenger at Arsenal left in real doubt. And then there was Bayer Leverkusen's axing of Roger Schmidt.

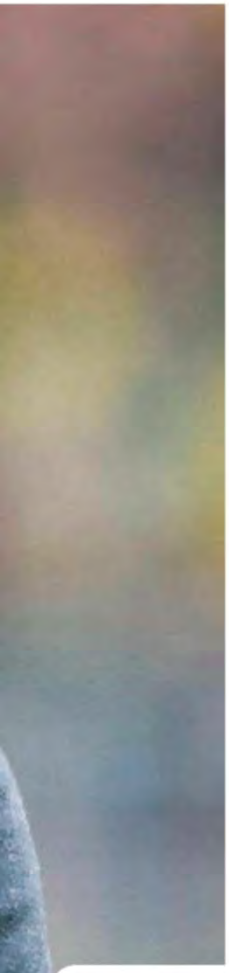
Over the best part of three seasons at the BayArena, the volatile Schmidt achieved a great deal, taking the club into the group stage of the Champions League three times, blooding several excellent young players, and at times producing some of the most exhilarating attacking football ever seen in the Bundesliga.

However, all good things eventually come to an end, and this season his side have stagnated across the board. Collectively, physically, mentally and technically.

At the end of February Schmidt's side were down in 10th spot in the table – with defeats outnumbering wins – and the Leverkusener had not slumped that low in 14 years. Since the end of the winter break things had gone from bad to worse, picking up six points from as many games, and losing the last three – including a humiliating 6-2 loss in Borussia Dortmund, which proved to be the final straw.

Schmidt no longer had any answers, and on the evidence of his post-match press conference he was taking refuge in delusion, insisting his team had played well and describing it as "a step in the right direction".

**Volatile... Roger Schmidt**



**With Schmidt's Leverkusen there was never a middle way. Either they swept all before them or they committed hara-kiri**

**Hammered...Bayer Leverkusen concede yet again against Borussia Dortmund**

The club's director of sport, Rudi Voller, stood by his man as long as he could. But like the rest of the board, he finally had to admit that desperate times demanded desperate measures. The hour for change had struck.

The Achilles heel of Schmidt was his death-or-glory tactical approach. Setting up his team to press high and in great numbers, he and his charges were effectively performing a high-wire act. Sometimes it worked spectacularly. But on other occasions they were left totally exposed.

With Schmidt's Leverkusen there was never a middle way. Either they swept all before them or they committed hara-kiri.

To replace Schmidt, the Leverkusen power-brokers have appointed former Turkish international Tayfun Korkut as caretaker until the end of the season. His mission is to simply steady the ship, improve the results and make up the deficit which separates the BayArena boys from a Europa League qualifying berth.

The all-important question is whether Tayfun is up to the task. Most would say not, as he hardly set the Bundesliga alight while in charge of Hanover, and this term he delivered next to nothing in an unhappy four-month stint at second-tier Kaiserslautern.

Number one on Leverkusen's wanted list now is Hoffenheim's Julian Nagelsmann, while another possibility is Nice's Swiss boss, Lucien Favre. WS

**Arrival...new boss Tayfun Korkut**

## GERMAN ROUND-UP

● A World Cup winner in 2014 – though he didn't get off the bench – and a key figure in Jurgen Klopp's all-conquering Borussia Dortmund, Kevin Grosskreutz is threatening to quit after his employers at second-tier leaders Stuttgart took exception to his involvement in a late-night fight in the city centre and terminated his contract.

"I don't want anything to do with football at the moment," declared the 28-year-old at a press conference.

A right-sided midfielder or full-back of considerable energy and drive, he can be something of a liability off the pitch, so when the dust settles his best option could be to move abroad.

● For the second time this season, Wolfsburg have told their coach to clear his desk. When a 2-1 home defeat by Werder Bremen left the club only a couple of points above the relegation zone, Valerien Ismael followed in the footsteps of Dieter Hecking and was shown the door.

Replacing him is Andries Jonker, a Dutchman who had been Arsenal's academy coach for the previous two-and-a-half years.

**Sacked...Stuttgart's Kevin Grosskreutz (left)**

Jonker was an assistant at Wolfsburg from 2012 and 2014, and in a previous life worked under Louis Van Gaal at Barcelona, Bayern Munich and with the Dutch national team.

"The players here are of good quality, but I've been amazed how little they are delivering," exclaimed Jonker at his first press conference with the VW club. "It's something I have to figure out quickly."

➤ successive OFC Under-17 title.
**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND:** Defending champions Dundalk kick off the new season with a 2-1 win at home to Shamrock Rovers.

## Saturday February 25

**CHINA:** Guangzhou Evergrande beat Jiangsu Suning 1-0 to add the Super Cup to the Super League and FA Cup titles they won last season.
**ITALY:** Atalanta, who are in fourth spot, win 2-0 at third-place Napoli.
**SPAIN:** Sevilla triumph 2-1 at Betis in the Seville derby.

## Sunday February 26

**ENGLAND:** Zlatan Ibrahimovic gets a late winner as Manchester United beat Southampton 3-2 in the League Cup Final.
**FRANCE:** A record crowd of 65,252 at Stade Velodrome see Marseille lose 5-1 to Paris Saint-Germain in their worst defeat at home in Ligue 1 since 1953.
**GERMANY:** Wolfsburg part company with coach Valerien Ismael after just 17 games following a 2-1 loss at home to Werder Bremen on Friday.
**GREECE:** Olympiakos lose at home in the league for the first time since December 2014, going down 1-0 to Panionios, who triumph in the fixture for the first time in 36 years.
**HOLLAND:** Feyenoord stay top of the table with a 10th consecutive win, beating defending champions PSV 2-1 and ending the visitors' run of 24 away games without defeat – one shy of the Eredivisie record.
**ITALY:** Radja Nainggolan scores twice as Roma win 3-1 away to Internazionale.
**NICARAGUA:** Real Esteli beat Chinandega 2-0 to make it 50 league games in a row unbeaten.
**SPAIN:** Real Madrid come from 2-0 down to win 3-2 at Villarreal, while Barcelona win 2-1 at Atletico Madrid. Deportivo La Coruna sack Gaizka Garitano after Saturday's 4-0 loss to Leganes.

## Monday February 27

**ENGLAND:** Leicester City move out of the bottom three with a 3-1 win over Liverpool in Craig Shakespeare's first game as caretaker manager.
**GERMANY:** Arsenal academy boss Andries Jonker, who was temporarily in charge of Bayern Munich for five games in 2011, becomes Wolfsburg's third coach of the season.
**ITALY:** After overseeing numerous coaching changes in his 15 years as Palermo president, Maurizio Zamparini steps down.
**UZBEKISTAN:** Salamat Kutibaev's goal after 19 seconds in Lokomotiv ➤

**Brazil**

TIM VICKERY

# Unloved...and now unused

## Empty World Cup stadiums remain a big problem

In recent years, Brazilian clubs have developed the habit of "selling" some of their home games, whereby they accept a financial offer to stage fixtures away from their own city. And momentum has been given to this movement by the construction of the 2014 World Cup stadiums – especially those in Brasilia, Cuiaba and Manaus.

There is an obvious problem here, as such practice clearly infringes the integrity of a league campaign which is based on the principle of every team meeting each other home and away.

Introduced a little more than a decade ago, the league format is relatively new in Brazil and it took a while for this basic point to be understood. Last year, though, came the realisation that the selling of home advantage was a distortion and it was banned for the closing rounds of the championship.

The clubs have now agreed to ban it outright from this year's national league, which kicks off in May.

The ban has led to howls of anguish from some, especially in Brasilia, Cuiaba and Manaus. Jaime Recena, Brasilia's secretary for sport, tourism and leisure, called the ban "an ill-judged, mistaken decision, which harms both the World Cup stadiums and the supporters" – and many agree with him.

Mass media, especially radio, initially played a huge role in spreading football around this giant country. Rio de Janeiro was the nation's capital until 1960 and radio stations broadcast matches featuring the city's big clubs all across the land. During the 1930s, when radio was becoming especially important, Flamengo re-branded themselves, changing from an elite outfit to a representative of the Brazilian working man. The move worked so well that people from all over the country felt such affinity with the club's new identity that to this day Flamengo can fill stadiums at the other end of the country. And while other clubs from the big centres may not have quite the same level of attraction, they can still boast nationwide followings.

This was all very well for developing and spreading the game, but at a certain point this can be an impediment to fully-fledged development because, at the end of the day, Flamengo are a club from Rio, in the south east – not from the north east, where they are very popular, or from Brasilia, in the centre of the country.

It is inevitable that Brasilia will have plenty of fans who support the Rio clubs since many public servants relocated there from Rio when the

**Vacant...the Estadio Nacional Mane Garrincha in Brasilia**

> "If these stadiums are dependent on the occasional matches of teams from elsewhere then the best they can hope for is a permanent life in the intensive care unit"

**Local support...Atletico Mineiro fans watch their team play in Belo Horizonte**

newly-built city became the capital. There is also a sizeable contingent of supporters of Atletico Mineiro, from Belo Horizonte.

"In Brasilia there are lots of Atletico fans who would like to see their team play here in the league," says Recena, who believes that clubs such as Flamengo and Atletico Mineiro should be allowed to play the occasional fixture in Brasilia in order to give a hugely expensive stadium something to do. But while many find this idea seductive, any short-term benefits are surely outweighed by long-term detriments.

Sold...Flamengo (in white) take on Goais in Cuiaba

There were two (honest) justifications for building stadiums in places such as Brasilia, Manaus and Cuiaba. The first was to include as much of the country as possible in the 2014 World Cup; the other, the important one, was to promote and foster the game in locations such as these which lack a tradition of strong local teams.

This second task will clearly take time. And it is highly likely that it is hindered by the sporadic visits of big clubs from the traditional centres. After all, how can the local club hope to build a support base when it is competing against such glamorous intruders? It is all very well for those from elsewhere in the country to retain an affection for the likes of Flamengo or Atletico Mineiro but, as an industry, the Brazilian game would do far better to transform them into fans of their local team – especially if they live in Brasilia, Manaus or Cuiaba, with their impressive, but idle, new stadiums.

If these stadiums are dependent on the occasional home games of teams from elsewhere then the best they can hope for is a permanent life in the intensive care unit. In the long term their only prospect of a healthy existence is to stage the games of a well-supported local team. If this is deemed impossible, it is an admission that these venues should never have been constructed. WS

➤ Tashkent's 2-0 win at home to Al Ahli of the UAE is the second fastest in AFC Champions League history.

## Tuesday February 28

**CHINA:** The Chinese Super League's transfer window closes with its 16 clubs having spent a combined total of £331m, outstripping the £215m spent by England's 20 top-tier teams in January.
**GERMANY:** Nine months after being diagnosed with testicular cancer, Eintracht Frankfurt midfielder Marco Russ returns as an injury-time sub during a 1-0 German Cup quarter-final victory over Arminia Bielefeld.
**SCOTLAND:** Motherwell sack boss Mark McGhee following Saturday's 5-1 defeat at home to Dundee.
**SPAIN:** Pepe Mel is named coach of Deportivo La Coruna until the end of the season, with the option to extend the deal.

## Wednesday March 1

**ARGENTINA:** Players from top-flight side Defensa y Justicia, who are based in Buenos Aires, are robbed at gunpoint before a training session.
**ITALY:** Napoli threaten to play their youth team in the second leg of the Italian Cup semi-final against Juventus in protest at refereeing decisions in Tuesday night's first game, which they lost 3-1 after Paulo Dybala scored two second-half penalties.
**SPAIN:** Barcelona beat Sporting Gijon 6-1, after which coach Luis Enrique says he will step down at the end of the season. Gareth Bale is sent off as Real Madrid come from 3-1 down to draw 3-3 with Las Palmas at the Bernabeu and set a new Spanish record by scoring in 45 successive games in all competitions.

## Thursday March 2

**BAHRAIN:** Manama win the King's Cup for the first time, beating holders Al Muharraq 2-1 in the Final.
**JAPAN:** Former Germany striker Lukas Podolski says he will leave Galatasaray at the end of the season and join J.League side Vissel Kobe.

## Friday March 3

**CHINA:** The Super League kicks off with a 1-1 draw between promoted Guizhou Zhicheng and Liaoning Whowin in an empty 52,000-capacity stadium which is closed due to a celebratory pitch invasion after the final game of last season.
**ITALY:** Adriano Galliani, Milan's CEO, confirms that the takeover of the club by a Chinese consortium has been officially postponed.
**USA:** Minnesota United lose 5-1 ➤

➤ at Portland Timbers on their MLS debut as the new season gets under way.

## Saturday March 4

**ENGLAND:** Alexis Sanchez is dropped to the bench as Arsenal lose 3-1 at Liverpool.
**ITALY:** Third-place Napoli close the gap on second-place Roma with a 2-1 win away.
**PORTUGAL:** Porto beat Nacional 7-0 to record their biggest league win since January 1999.
**SERBIA:** League leaders Red Star are held to a 1-1 home draw by Belgrade rivals Partizan.
**WALES:** The New Saints retain their Welsh Premier League title with seven games still to play by beating Bangor City 4-0.

## Sunday March 5

**ALGERIA:** MO Bejaia's 27-year-old midfielder Youcef Touati dies following a car crash in France.
**GERMANY:** Bayer Leverkusen dismiss their coach Roger Schmidt after Saturday's 6-2 thrashing at Borussia Dortmund.
**ITALY:** Andrea Belotti scores an eight-minute hat-trick in Torino's 3-1 victory over his former club Palermo.
**SCOTLAND:** Celtic beat St Mirren 4-1 and will now meet Rangers in the Scottish Cup semi-finals at Hampden Park in April.
**USA:** Victory over Honduras on penalties in the Final sees the USA win the CONCACAF Under-20 Championship. The two finalists will be joined by Costa Rica and Mexico in this year's Under-20 World Cup.

## Monday March 6

**GERMANY:** Tayfun Korkut takes charge of Bayer Leverkusen for the rest of the season.
**GREECE:** Olympiakos dismiss boss Paulo Bento the day after a 2-0 defeat at PAOK on Sunday sees them lose three league games in a row for the first time in 21 years.

## Tuesday March 7

**BRAZIL:** Chapecoense make their Libertadores Cup debut and win 2-1 against Zulia in Venezuela.
**ENGLAND:** Arsenal are thrashed 5-1 at home by Bayern Munich, who are joined in the Champions League quarter-finals by Real Madrid, who beat Napoli 6-2 on aggregate.
**SPAIN:** Malaga dismiss coach Marcelo Romero and replace him with Michel.

## Wednesday March 8

**GERMANY:** Having missed a penalty in the 1-0 defeat away at Benfica, ➤

Argentina

JOEL RICHARDS

# A sorry state of affairs

## Strike ends but problems remain

For 80 days, from December to March, there was no football in Argentina, and it took an £18million government bailout to end the first players' strike since the late 1990s. During those negotiations, coaches from across the divisions set up a WhatsApp group which, according to Tigre boss Pedro Troglio, was initially "to arrange summer friendlies". However, as details emerged of the dire situation faced by many coaches and players across the country, the group became a forum. "It brought about unity," says Troglio.

The strike action affected football across the whole country, from the lower leagues to the top flight. So while supporters at Newell's Old Boys may be dreaming about Lionel Messi ending his playing career back home in Rosario, the current crop of players at the Estadio Marcelo Bielsa are among those who are still owed their wages. Cases of players who have gone without pay for four months are common at several clubs, while Primera Division side Quilmes had one player who claimed to be unable to pay rent on his apartment. He would stay for lunch after training to ensure he ate at least one square meal a day. Meanwhile, lower-league club San Telmo recently reported that three youth-team players did not have enough money to even travel to training.

The strike was just the latest of many taken by Argentinian footballers over the years. Industrial action taken by players led to the game turning professional in 1931, and the 1948 dispute led to the likes of Adolfo Pedernera and Alfredo Di Stefano moving to the Colombian league. "In a year in Colombia we earned 10 times what we were paid in Buenos Aires," wrote Di Stefano in his autobiography.

Back in business...River Plate (in black) and Union Santa Fe

Argentina is currently embroiled in various labour disputes and the large, powerful trade unions have called national strikes for late March and early April And while the players were negotiating a deal to ensure payment for those owed money, River Plate captain Leo Ponzio was offering solidarity to the schoolteachers who were also on strike as their wage negotiations had broken down.

"Football has its place for society," commented Ponzio, talking during the frenzy that was created by the delay to the start of the second half of the season. "But there are many more important things and one of those is education."

But while the league is finally now up and running, there is still the question of how supporters will watch games in the future.

For eight years, top-flight football in the country has been broadcast under the rather eccentric "Football For All" project, which sees the government as the rights holder and all games free to air. Billed as a democratic right to watch football, the national game has become a glorified propaganda tool for the government, while the opportunity to market and sell

Movers and shakers...(left to right)...Boca president Daniel Angelici, Javier Medin of the AFA, San Lorenzo vice-president Marcelo Tinelli, AFA's Carolina Cristinziano and Claudio Tapia of the AFA

the product, making it a profitable operation for the state, has been squandered. Viewers abroad can even watch games live on YouTube.

The former Boca Juniors president Mauricio Macri took office as president of the nation in December 2015, promising to transform the country's economy. He also said that Football For All would remain for the duration of the contract, which ran until 2019. That swiftly changed and the Argentinian Football Association (AFA) is now looking for a new television-rights partner. A joint bid from Fox-Turner vied for the contract along with ESPN and Spanish company MediaPro. Yet the AFA still faced litigation from TSC, the previous rights holders in 2009, when the existing contract was ripped up and Football For All began. TSC, owned by the powerful Clarin Group and Torneos production company, informed the AFA that the lawsuit would be dropped if Fox-Turner won the rights, which it did, agreeing to pay £166m per year in a five-year contract. TSC, meanwhile, returns as the production arm in the new TV deal. So, as of August, football will return to cable TV, reportedly for a £15 monthly subscription fee.

Project...Mauricio Macri

Against the backdrop of the strike and a new TV deal is an AFA still in a vacuum since the passing away of ex-president Julio Grondona in 2014. Currently overseen by a FIFA normalisation committee, presidential elections are due at the end of March, although the evaluation of candidates has been a cause for concern in Zurich.

"I am confident no drastic measures will be necessary," claimed FIFA president Gianni Infantino recently. But in Argentina, fears of disaffiliation by the world governing body have been regularly aired in recent months.

And amid all of this, there is football to be played – even if the strike has left an even more compressed time-frame for a 30-team Primera Division. WS

> "Football has its place for society, but there are many more important things and one of those is education"
>
> River Plate captain Leo Ponzio

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang makes amends with a hat-trick as Borussia Dortmund reach the Champions League last eight with a 4-0 win.

**HOLLAND:** National captain Wesley Sneijder is dropped from the squad to face Bulgaria and Italy later in March because coach Danny Blind says he is not fit enough. Lazio central defender Wesley Hoedt is called up for the first time.

**SPAIN:** Trailing 4-0 from the away leg, Barcelona score twice in injury time to beat Paris Saint-Germain 6-1 in the return and progress in the Champions League.

**USA:** LA Galaxy offer to make Zlatan Ibrahimovic the highest-paid player in MLS history if he joins them from Manchester United this summer.

## Thursday March 9

**ARGENTINA:** The players' strike which has delayed the start of the season ends and the new campaign gets underway with Velez Sarsfield beating Estudiantes 3-2.

**DENMARK:** Goalkeeper Robin Olsen concedes at home for the first time in 999 minutes but Copenhagen still beat Ajax 2-1 in the Europa League.

**MAURITIUS:** AS Port-Louis keeper Joseph Leopold is not allowed to travel to Sudan to face Al Hilal in the Champions League because of drug-trafficking charges. He was arrested in September after heroin was found at his home.

## Friday March 10

**FRANCE:** Nice come from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Caen but miss the chance to draw level on points with league leaders Monaco.

**ITALY:** Fiorentina unveil plans for a new 40,000-seat stadium to be built in a north-west suburb of Florence and which they hope to be playing in by 2021. Paulo Dybala scores a 97th-minute penalty as Juventus beat Milan 2-1 for a 31st successive home win in Serie A.

**LATVIA:** Last season's runners-up Jelgava beat promoted Babite 1-0 as the new season kicks off.

**NORTH KOREA:** The AFC postpones the Asian Cup qualifier between North Korea and Malaysia in Pyongyang on March 28 due to escalating diplomatic tension between the two countries.

**PORTUGAL:** Francisco Soares scores in his sixth successive league game since signing from Vitoria Guimaraes in January, getting two goals as Porto beat Arouca 4-0 for a ninth successive Liga victory.

**RUSSIA:** CSKA Moscow defender Vasily Berezutsky, who has won 101 caps for Russia, quits international ➤

➤ football a year before his homeland hosts the World Cup.
**SAUDI ARABIA:** English ref Mark Clattenburg takes charge of the Crown Prince Cup Final as Al Ittihad beat Al Nassr 1-0.

## Saturday March 11

**FRANCE:** Monaco beat Bordeaux 2-1 to extend their advantage at the top of Ligue 1 to five points.
**GERMANY:** Bayern Munich beat Eintracht Frankfurt 3-0 and increase their lead at the top of the table as Red Bull Leipzig lose 1-0 at home to Wolfsburg and Borussia Dortmund go down 2-1 at Hertha Berlin.
**ITALY:** Sampdoria beat Genoa 1-0 to complete a first double over their city rivals for 57 years.
**USA:** Goalkeeper Luis Robles sets a new record with a 142nd consecutive MLS appearance as New York Red Bulls beat Colorado Rapids 1-0.

## Sunday March 12

**ENGLAND:** Leicester City appoint Craig Shakespeare as manager until the end of the season.
**ITALY:** Mauro Icardi and Ever Banega both score hat-tricks as Internazionale thrash Atalanta 7-1.
**SCOTLAND:** Celtic drop points for only the second time this season with a 1-1 draw at home to Rangers.
**SPAIN:** Barcelona lose 2-1 at struggling Deportivo La Coruna, which allows Real Madrid to go top with a 2-1 victory over Real Betis.
**TURKEY:** Emmanuel Adebayor scores on his first start for Istanbul Basaksehir as they beat Konyaspor 3-0 and remain second in the table.
**USA:** In the battle of the MLS new boys, Atlanta United beat Minnesota United 6-1.
**ZAMBIA:** The hosts, Zambia, beat Senegal 2-0 in the Final of the Under-20s African Nations Cup. Both finalists qualify for this year's Under-20 World Cup, along with Guinea and South Africa.

## Monday March 13

**ENGLAND:** Chelsea win 1-0 at home to Manchester United in the FA Cup and will now face Tottenham Hotspur in the semi-finals. Arsenal meet Manchester City in the other last-four tie.
**PORTUGAL:** A 4-0 victory at home to Belenenses sees Benfica return to the top of the table.

## Tuesday March 14

**BRAZIL:** Second-tier Boa Esporte sign goalkeeper Bruno Fernandes, who was sentenced to 22 years in prison for the 2010 murder of his ex-girlfriend but then released in ➤

**Belize**

BRYAN KAY

# The next level

## Region's minnows look to move forward

Central America isn't exactly stacked with top footballing talent, with the sliver of nations located on the isthmus between North and South America rarely represent anything other than a minor irritation to the usual suspects on their march to a World Cup finals.

While Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama are the region's big guns, Guatemala and El Salvador are more run of the mill. Of the other two, Nicaragua have at least made strides out of the footballing doldrums of late, while Belize – with pitifully few resources and a mostly part-time playing pool to work with – remain somewhat in the mire.

And the task of trying to change that now rests with journeyman coach Richard Orlowski, a little known Polish-American who took charge just before Christmas.

The 60-year-old replaced locally-based Brazilian Jorge Nunez at the helm as Belize were preparing for January's edition of the Centroamericana Cup, a tournament at which not much was expected of the region's least populous nation. The biennial competition decides who are Central America champions and doubles as a qualifier for the Gold Cup, the greater region's main event.

Belize's usual place in the pecking order is last, or close to it. Not only is Belize the youngest country of the seven Central American nations, the former British colony did not play its first international until 1995 – some 14 years after gaining independence in 1981.

In the latest set of duels with their nearest neighbours, the land formerly known as British Honduras finished last as all but one of their matches ended in defeat. They did, however, score a couple of goals – one each against El Salvador and Nicaragua.

But there is a bigger picture here. Orlowski has been placed in charge of the entire national team set-up, including all of the age-group teams. His job is unenviable, but he has been tasked with hauling up the 350,000-populace nation's football by the bootstraps.

It's the kind of challenge Orlowski has undertaken before – and they come no more formidable than his last mission, working on an even smaller stage with the tiny Caribbean island of Anguilla.

It was a mammoth task as they were on the cusp of becoming the world's worst team in the FIFA rankings. Ultimately, his tenure did not last particularly long and he described his working environment as emblematic of the chaos often associated with football organization in Caribbean countries. His time in charge of the British overseas territory included a brief 2018 World Cup qualifying sojourn: an 8-0 aggregate thumping at the hands of a slightly better equipped Nicaragua in March 2015.

> A former British colony, Belize did not play its first international until 1995

Yet such Spartan surroundings clearly do not deter Orlowski and the early murmurings of his time in charge of Belize indicate that the players are buying into his philosophy.

Their opening encounter against Panama in the Centroamericana Cup caused a minor ripple. Up against the relative might of *Los Canaleros*, one of the more fancied sides in the tournament, they fought to earn an extremely creditable 0-0 draw. It was ultra-defensive but successful, and now the coach must turn his attention to problems at the other end of the pitch, with composure in front of goal identified as a particular weakness.

Orlowski is no stranger to hardship. Born and raised in Poland, he left his homeland during the Eastern European country's communist era in the 1980s, eventually finding sanctuary in the United States.

He first appeared on the horizon of international football when he joined Jack Stefanowski at the helm of Nepal in 2013. Some success followed as Orlowski, who had once coached a much more youthful Stefanowski, assisted the New Yorker as he led Nepal to a rare victory over India and progression to the next round of the South Asian Football Federation Championship.

That's the kind of magic for which Belize will be dreaming. The incredible point

**Experience...Belize's Police United (in yellow) in Champions League action**

Upset...Ian Gaynair (in white) helps Belize draw with Panama in the Centroamericana Cup

gained against Panama might be considered an aberration given what followed yet the Belize players – who mostly hail from domestic clubs such as Belmopan Bandits, Police United and Belize Defence Force – held their own in patches of their other matches. They even went close to another draw, against Nicaragua, before conceding two goals in the last 10 minutes to lose 3-1.

So, even with the paltry resources at his disposal, Orlowski might just have what it takes to lead his new charges to the next level. WS

Proud...detail of a Belize pennant prior to playing Nicaragua

➤ February on a legal technicality.
**ENGLAND:** Kasper Schmeichel saves a penalty with 10 minutes to go as Leicester City overturn a 2-1 first-leg deficit to beat Sevilla 3-2 on aggregate in the Champions League.
**MEXICO:** Club America's Pablo Aguilar and Toluca's Enrique Triverio have bans for clashing with match officials extended, which brings the referees' strike to an end. Tigres beat Vancouver Whitecaps 2-0 in the CONCACAF Champions League.
**PORTUGAL:** Iker Casillas makes a record-breaking 175th European club competition appearance as Porto lose 1-0 at Juventus.

## Wednesday March 15

**CROATIA:** Hajduk Split are ordered to play two home games behind closed doors after incidents during their weekend clash with Rijeka that included a masked spectator chasing the referee with a metal bar.
**FRANCE:** Monaco overturn a two-goal deficit from the first leg and beat Manchester City 3-1 at home to draw 6-6 on aggregate in the Champions League and go through on away goals.
**RUSSIA:** A week after Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho criticised their pitch ahead of a Europa League tie, Rostov are banned by the Russian Premier League from hosting games due to "shortfalls" in the playing surface.
**USA:** Dallas are the first team from the US to defeat a Mexican side at the CONCACAF Champions League semi-final stage, winning their home leg against Pachuca 2-1.

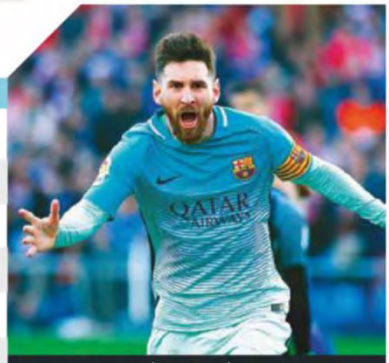
## Thursday March 16

**CAF:** Ahmad Ahmad of Madagascar is elected president of CAF, ousting veteran leader Issa Hayatou.
**ENGLAND:** Steve Agnew takes temporary control of Middlesbrough as they sack Aitor Karanka.
**GERMANY:** Schalke come from 2-0 down on the night, and 3-1 behind on aggregate, to draw 3-3 and beat Borussia Monchengladbach on away goals in the Europa League.
**ITALY:** The wife of former Chelsea midfielder Michael Essien buys Italian third-tier club Como, who were declared bankrupt last year.

## Friday March 17

**MALI:** FIFA suspend the Malian Football Association with immediate effect over government interference.
**GERMANY:** A ninth goal in five games, in all competitions, for Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang gives Borussia Dortmund a 1-0 victory over Ingolstadt. WS

| Pos | Name | Goals | Factor | Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lionel Messi *(Barcelona)* | 23 | 2 | 46 |
| 2 | Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang *(Borussia Dortmund)* | 22 | 2 | 44 |
| | Andrea Belotti *(Torino)* | 22 | 2 | 44 |
| | Bas Dost *(Sporting)* | 22 | 2 | 44 |
| 5 | Robert Lewandowski *(Bayern Munich)* | 21 | 2 | 42 |
| | Luis Saurez *(Barcelona)* | 21 | 2 | 42 |

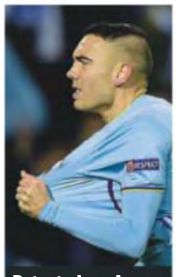

Top...Barcelona's Lionel Messi leads the way

Threat... Bas Dost

Powerful... Romelu Lukaku

| Pos | Name | Goals | Factor | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | EDINSON CAVANI *(Paris Saint-Germain)* | 27 | 1.5 | 40.5 |
| 8 | EDIN DZEKO *(Roma)* | 20 | 2 | 40 |
| | MAURO ICARDI *(Internazionale)* | 20 | 2 | 40 |
| 10 | GONZALO HIGUAIN *(Juventus)* | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | HARRY KANE *(Tottenham Hotspur)* | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | ROMELU LUKAKU *(Everton)* | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | DRIES MERTENS *(Napoli)* | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | ANTHONY MODESTE *(Cologne)* | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | CRISTIANO RONALDO *(Real Madrid)* | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| 16 | DIEGO COSTA *(Chelsea)* | 17 | 2 | 34 |
| | CIRO IMMOBILE *(Lazio)* | 17 | 2 | 34 |
| | ALEXIS SANCHEZ *(Arsenal)* | 17 | 2 | 34 |
| 19 | ALEXANDRE LACAZETTE *(Lyon)* | 22 | 1.5 | 33 |
| 20 | FRANCISCO SOARES *(Guimaraes/Porto)* | 16 | 2 | 32 |
| 21 | MATT DERBYSHIRE *(Omonia Nicosia)* | 20 | 1.5 | 30 |
| | ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC *(Manchester United)* | 15 | 2 | 30 |
| | ANDRE SILVA *(Porto)* | 15 | 2 | 30 |
| | LUKASZ TEODORCZYK *(Anderlecht)* | 20 | 1.5 | 30 |
| 25 | CHRISTIAN GYTKJAER *(Rosenborg)* | 19 | 1.5 | 28.5 |
| 26 | IAGO ASPAS *(Celta Vigo)* | 14 | 2 | 28 |

Lethal...Mauro Icardi


Potent...Iago Aspas

| Pos | Name | Goals | Factor | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | JERMAINE DEFOE *(Sunderland)* | 14 | 2 | 28 |
| | KONSTANTINOS MITROGLOU *(Benfica)* | 14 | 2 | 28 |
| | TIMO WERNER *(RB Leipzig)* | 14 | 2 | 28 |
| 30 | NICOLAI JORGENSEN *(Feyenoord)* | 18 | 1.5 | 27 |
| 31 | DELE ALLI *(Tottenham Hotspur)* | 13 | 2 | 26 |
| | ANTOINE GRIEZMANN *(Atletico Madrid)* | 13 | 2 | 26 |
| | NIKOLA KALINIA *(Fiorentina)* | 13 | 2 | 26 |
| 34 | MARCUS BERG *(Panathinaikos)* | 17 | 1.5 | 25.5 |
| | JOHN OWOERI *(Hacken)* | 17 | 1.5 | 25.5 |
| 36 | EVGENI KABAEV *(Sillamae Kalev)* | 25 | 1 | 25 |
| 37 | SERGIO AGUERO *(Manchester City)* | 12 | 2 | 24 |
| | CARLOS BACCA *(Milan)* | 12 | 2 | 24 |
| | MARCO BORRIELLO *(Cagliari)* | 12 | 2 | 24 |
| | RADAMEL FALCAO *(Monaco)* | 16 | 1.5 | 24 |
| | BAFETIMBI GOMIS *(Marseille)* | 16 | 1.5 | 24 |
| | GUILLAUME HOARAU *(Young Boys)* | 16 | 1.5 | 24 |
| | AZDREN LLULLAKU *(Gaz Metan Medias)* | 16 | 1.5 | 24 |
| | SADIO MANE *(Liverpool)* | 12 | 2 | 24 |
| | MOUSSA MAREGA *(Guimaraes)* | 12 | 2 | 24 |
| | PIEROS SOTIROU *(APOEL Nicosia)* | 16 | 1.5 | 24 |
| | CENK TOSUN *(Besiktas)* | 16 | 1.5 | 24 |

*(up to and inc 13.03.17)*

# Internationals

## FRIENDLIES

**Thursday, February 16**

*Feb16 - Houston, USA*
**Honduras 0**
**Jamaica 1** (Lowe 71)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)
**Honduras:** L Lopez - Crisanto (Altamirano 74), H Figueroa, Alvarado, Oseguera, Morazan, Claros (Acosta 66), Canales, Salas (Chirinos 64), Castillo (Tejeda 64), Andino (Vargas 74).
**Jamaica:** Thompson - Lowe, Richie, Harriott, Fisher (Lawrence 51), Lambert (Lewis 74), Watson, Binns, O Gordon (Ambusley 90), Nicholson (R Williams 64), Fletcher (Burke 64).

**Wednesday, February 22**

*Feb 22 - Guayaquil*
**Ecuador 3** (M Caicedo 54, Arboleda 60, Cevallos 82)
**Honduras 1** (Andino 25)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Haro (Per)
**Ecuador:** Dreer (Banguera 68) - Pineida, Aimar, Arboleda, Bagui (Quinteros 80), Quinonez (Gaibor 56), Oyola (Sierra 83), Preciado (Cabezas 63), M Caicedo, Cortez (Cevallos 69), Estrada.
**Honduras:** L Lopez - Puerto (Acosta 80), H Figueroa, Alvarado, Oseguera (Garcia 80), Morazan, Claros (Altamirano 74), Canales (Chirinos 60), Vargas, Castillo (Tejeda 69), Andino (Salas 66).

*Feb 22 - Serravalle*
**San Marino 0**
**Andorra 2** (Lima 28, C Martinez 66)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Irrati (Ita)
**San Marino:** Benedettini (A Simoncini 46) - D'Addario (Rinaldi 72), Alessandro Della Valle, D Simoncini (Hirsch 85), Palazzi, Lunadei (Tosi 46), E Golinucci (A Golinucci 46), Domeniconi, Zafferani (Tomassini 62), M Vitaioli, Stefanelli.
**Andorra:** Pol - C Martinez (Clemente 78), Vales, Lima, Pujol (E Garcia 82), M Vieira, A Martinez (Alaez 58), Llovera (Rodrigues 89), M Garcia (San Nicolas 67), Rodriguez (Moreno 76), Rubio.

## 2017 CONCACAF GOLD CUP FINALS

*To be played in the United States*

### Schedule[1]

**Group A**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jul 7 | French Guiana v Canada (Harrison) |
| | Honduras v Costa Rica (Harrison) |
| Jul 11 | Costa Rica v Canada (Houston) |
| | Honduras v French Guiana (Houston) |
| Jul 14 | Costa Rica v French Guiana (Frisco) |
| | Canada v Honduras (Frisco) |

**Group B**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jul 8 | USA v Panama (Nashville) |
| | Martinique v *Haiti OR Nicaragua* (Nashville) |
| Jul 12 | Panama v *Haiti OR Nicaragua* (Tampa) |
| | USA v Martinique (Tampa) |
| Jul 15 | Panama v Martinique (Cleveland) |
| | *Haiti OR Nicaragua* v USA (Cleveland) |

**Group C**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jul 9 | Curacao v Jamaica (San Diego) |
| | Mexico v El Salvador (San Diego) |
| Jul 13 | El Salvador v Curacao (Denver) |
| | Mexico v Jamaica (Denver) |
| Jul 16 | Jamaica v El Salvador (San Antonio) |
| | Curacao v Mexico (San Antonio) |

● *The top 2 in each group & the 2 3rd-placed countries with the best record will qualify for the quarter-finals*

**Quarter-finals**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jul 19 | Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (QF1) (Philadelphia) |
| | Gp B 1st v Gp A/C 3rd (QF2) (Philad'phia) |
| Jul 20 | Gp C 1st v Gp A/B 3rd (QF3) (Glendale) |
| | Gp C 2nd v Gp A 2nd (QF4) (Glendale) |

**Semi-finals**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jul 22 | QF1 winner v QF2 winner (Arlington) |
| Jul 23 | QF3 winner v QF4 winner (Pasadena) |

**Final**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jul 26 | (Santa Clara) |

[1]*Match order subject to change*

## 2019 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

### 3rd round fixtures

**Group A**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mar 28, 2017 | Kyrgyzstan v Macau |
| | Myanmar v India |
| Jun 13, 2017 | India v Kyrgyzstan |
| | Macau v Myanmar |
| Sep 5, 2017 | Kyrgyzstan v Myanmar |
| | Macau v India |
| Oct 10, 2017 | India v Macau |
| | Myanmar v Kyrgyzstan |
| Nov 14, 2017 | India v Myanmar |
| | Macau v Kyrgyzstan |
| Mar 27, 2018 | Kyrgyzstan v India |
| | Myanmar v Macau |

**Group B**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mar 28, 2017 | Lebanon v Hong Kong |
| | North Korea v Malaysia |
| Jun 13, 2017 | Hong Kong v North Korea |
| | Malaysia v Lebanon |
| Sep 5, 2017 | Malaysia v Hong Kong |
| | North Korea v Lebanon |
| Oct 10, 2017 | Hong Kong v Malaysia |
| | Lebanon v North Korea |
| Nov 14, 2017 | Hong Kong v Lebanon |
| | Malaysia v North Korea |
| Mar 27, 2018 | Lebanon v Malaysia |
| | North Korea v Hong Kong |

**Group C**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mar 28, 2017 | Afghanistan v Vietnam |
| | Jordan v Cambodia |
| Jun 13, 2017 | Cambodia v Afghanistan |
| | Vietnam v Jordan |
| Sep 5, 2017 | Cambodia v Vietnam |
| | Jordan v Afghanistan |
| Oct 10, 2017 | Afghanistan v Jordan |
| | Vietnam v Cambodia |
| Nov 14, 2017 | Cambodia v Jordan |
| | Vietnam v Afghanistan |
| Mar 27, 2018 | Afghanistan v Cambodia |
| | Jordan v Vietnam |

**Group D**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mar 28, 2017 | Maldives v Palestine |
| | Oman v Bhutan |
| Jun 13, 2017 | Bhutan v Maldives |
| | Palestine v Oman |
| Sep 5, 2017 | Bhutan v Palestine |
| | Oman v Maldives |
| Oct 10, 2017 | Maldives v Oman |
| | Palestine v Bhutan |
| Nov 14, 2017 | Bhutan v Oman |
| | Palestine v Maldives |
| Mar 27, 2018 | Maldives v Bhutan |
| | Oman v Palestine |

**Group E**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mar 26, 2017 | Taiwan v Turkmenistan |
| Mar 28, 2017 | Bahrain v Singapore |
| Jun 13, 2017 | Singapore v Taiwan |
| | Turkmenistan v Bahrain |
| Sep 5, 2017 | Bahrain v Taiwan |
| | Singapore v Turkmenistan |
| Oct 10, 2017 | Taiwan v Bahrain |
| | Turkmenistan v Singapore |
| Nov 14, 2017 | Singapore v Bahrain |
| | Turkmenistan v Taiwan |
| Mar 27, 2018 | Bahrain v Turkmenistan |
| | Taiwan v Singapore |

**Group F**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mar 28, 2017 | Philippines v Nepal |
| | Yemen v Tajikistan |
| Jun 13, 2017 | Nepal v Yemen |
| | Tajikistan v Philippines |
| Sep 5, 2017 | Nepal v Tajikistan |
| | Philippines v Yemen |
| Oct 10, 2017 | Tajikistan v Nepal |
| | Yemen v Philippines |
| Nov 14, 2017 | Nepal v Philippines |
| | Tajikistan v Yemen |
| Mar 27, 2018 | Philippines v Tajikistan |
| | Yemen v Nepal |

● *The top 2 in each group will qualify for the 24-team finals, to be played in UAE. 12 teams have already qualified for the finals – Australia, China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Syria, Thailand, UAE (as hosts) and Uzbekistan*

## 2019 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

### Fixtures

**Group A**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Senegal v Equatorial Guinea |
| | Sudan v *Sao Tome e Principe OR Madagascar* |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Equatorial Guinea v Sudan |
| | *Sao Tome e Principe OR Madagascar* v Senegal |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Equatorial Guinea v *Sao Tome e Principe OR Madagascar* |
| | Senegal v Sudan |
| | *Sao Tome e Principe OR Madagascar* v Equat Guinea |
| | Sudan v Senegal |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Equatorial Guinea v Senegal |
| | *Sao Tome e Principe OR Madagascar* v Sudan |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Senegal v *Sao Tome e Principe OR Madagascar* |
| | Sudan v Equatorial Guinea |

**Group B**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Cameroon v Morocco |
| | Malawi v *Comoros OR Mauritius* |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | *Comoros OR Mauritius* v Cameroon |
| | Morocco v Malawi |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Cameroon v Malawi |
| | Morocco v *Comoros OR Mauritius* |
| | *Comoros OR Mauritius* v Morocco |
| | Malawi v Cameroon |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | *Comoros OR Mauritius* v Malawi |
| | Morocco v Cameroon |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Cameroon v *Comoros OR Mauritius* |
| | Malawi v Morocco |

**Group C**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Burundi v *Djibouti OR South Sudan* |
| | Mali v Gabon |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | *Djibouti OR South Sudan* v Mali |
| | Gabon v Burundi |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Gabon v *Djibouti OR South Sudan* |
| | Mali v Burundi |
| | Burundi v Mali |
| | *Djibouti OR South Sudan* v Gabon |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | *Djibouti OR South Sudan* v Burundi |
| | Gabon v Mali |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Burundi v Gabon |
| | Mali v *Djibouti OR South Sudan* |

**Group D**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Algeria v Togo |
| | Benin v Gambia |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Gambia v Algeria |
| | Togo v Benin |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Algeria v Benin |
| | Togo v Gambia |
| | Benin v Algeria |
| | Gambia v Togo |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Gambia v Benin |
| | Togo v Algeria |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Algeria v Gambia |
| | Benin v Togo |

**Group E**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Libya v Seychelles |
| | Nigeria v South Africa |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Seychelles v Nigeria |
| | South Africa v Libya |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Nigeria v Libya |
| | South Africa v Seychelles |
| | Libya v Nigeria |
| | Seychelles v South Africa |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Seychelles v Libya |
| | South Africa v Nigeria |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Libya v South Africa |
| | Nigeria v Seychelles |

**Group F**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Ghana v Ethiopia |
| | Sierra Leone v Kenya |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Ethiopia v Sierra Leone |
| | Kenya v Ghana |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Ethiopia v Kenya |
| | Ghana v Sierra Leone |
| | Kenya v Ethiopia |
| | Sierra Leone v Ghana |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Ethiopia v Ghana |
| | Kenya v Sierra Leone |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Ghana v Kenya |
| | Sierra Leone v Ethiopia |

**Group G**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | DR Congo v Congo |
| | Zimbabwe v Liberia |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Congo v Zimbabwe |
| | Liberia v DR Congo |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Congo v Liberia |
| | DR Congo v Zimbabwe |
| | Liberia v Congo |
| | Zimbabwe v DR Congo |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Congo v DR Congo |
| | Liberia v Zimbabwe |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | DR Congo v Liberia |
| | Zimbabwe v Congo |

**Group H**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Central African Rep v Rwanda |
| | Ivory Coast v Guinea |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Guinea v Central African Rep |
| | Rwanda v Ivory Coast |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Guinea v Rwanda |
| | Ivory Coast v Central African Rep |
| | Central African Rep v Ivory Coast |
| | Rwanda v Guinea |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Guinea v Ivory Coast |
| | Rwanda v Central African Rep |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Central African Rep v Guinea |
| | Ivory Coast v Rwanda |

**Group I**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Botswana v Mauritania |
| | Burkina Faso v Angola |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Angola v Botswana |
| | Mauritania v Burkina Faso |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Angola v Mauritania |
| | Burkina Faso v Botswana |
| | Botswana v Burkina Faso |
| | Mauritania v Angola |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Angola v Burkina Faso |
| | Mauritania v Botswana |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Botswana v Angola |
| | Burkina Faso v Mauritania |

**Group J**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Niger v Swaziland |
| | Tunisia v Egypt |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Egypt v Niger |
| | Swaziland v Tunisia |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Egypt v Swaziland |
| | Tunisia v Niger |
| | Niger v Tunisia |
| | Swaziland v Egypt |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Egypt v Tunisia |
| | Swaziland v Niger |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Niger v Egypt |
| | Tunisia v Swaziland |

**Group K**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Guinea-Bissau v Namibia |
| | Zambia v Mozambique |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Mozambique v Guinea-Bissau |
| | Namibia v Zambia |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Mozambique v Namibia |
| | Zambia v Guinea-Bissau |
| | Guinea-Bissau v Zambia |
| | Namibia v Mozambique |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Mozambique v Zambia |
| | Namibia v Guinea-Bissau |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Guinea-Bissau v Mozambique |
| | Zambia v Namibia |

**Group L**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jun 5-13, 2017 | Cape Verde Islands v Uganda |
| | Tanzania v Lesotho |
| Mar 19-27, 2018 | Lesotho v Cape Verde Islands |
| | Uganda v Tanzania |
| Sep 3-11, 2018 (2 matchdays) | Cape Verde Islands v Tanzania |
| | Uganda v Lesotho |
| | Lesotho v Uganda |
| | Tanzania v Cape Verde Islands |
| Oct 8-16, 2018 | Lesotho v Tanzania |
| | Uganda v Cape Verde Islands |
| Nov 5-13, 2018 | Cape Verde Islands v Lesotho |
| | Tanzania v Uganda |

● *The12 group winners and the 3 runners-up with the best record will qualify for the16-team finals. Hosts Cameroon qualify for the finals automatically but have been drawn into qualifying Group B. Should they win this group, the runners-up will qualify automatically for the finals; should Cameroon finish runners-up in the group, only the group winners will qualify for the finals (apart from Cameroon themselves) - i.e. the 3rd-placed country will not be considered for one of the 3 best runners-up places at the finals*

# Club football

## AFRICA

### CAF SUPER CUP

*Champions League holders, Mamelodi Sundowns v Confederation Cup holders, TP Mazembe*

*Feb18 - Pretoria, South Africa*
**Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) 1** (Ricardo Nascimento pen 83)
**TP Mazembe (DRC) 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 33,000. **Ref:** Grisha (Egy)
**Mamelodi Sundowns:** Onyango - Morena, Arendse, Ricardo Nascimento, Langerman, Mabunda, Kekana, Laffor (Soumahoro 86), Billiat (Ngcongca 90+2), T Zwane (Vilakazi 90+3), Tau.
**TP Mazembe:** Gbohouo - Mpeko, Kimwaki, Coulibaly, Kasusula, Sinkala, Nii Adjei, Asante, Kalaba (Traore 80), Meschak (Mputu 58), Malango.

### CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

#### Preliminary round

*1st legs - Feb10-12; 2nd legs - Feb18/19*
AC Leopards (Con) v UMS de Loum (Cam)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, AC Leopards on away goals)
Barrack Young Controllers (Lbr) v Stade Malien (Mli)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, BYC 7-6 on pens)
CNaPS (Mad) v Township Rollers (Bot)
2-1, 2-3 (agg 4-4, CNaPS on away goals)
Cote d'Or (Sey) v Saint George (Eth)
0-2, 0-3 (agg 0-5)
Coton Sport (Cam) v Atlabara (SSu)
2-0, 5-2 (agg 7-2)
Gambia Ports Authority (Gam) v Sewe Sport (IvC)
1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
Goree (Sen) v Horoya (Gui)
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
Johansen (SLe) v FUS Rabat (Mor)
1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4)
JS Saoura (Alg) v Enugu Rangers (Nga)
1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1, Enugu Rangers on away goals)
KCCA (Uga) v Primeiro de Agosto (Ang)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, KCCA on away goals)
Lioli (Les) v CAPS United (Zim)
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
Mounana (Gab) v Vital'O (Bdi)
2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0)
Ngaya (Com) v Young Africans (Tan)
1-5, 1-1 (agg 2-6)
Rail Club du Kadiogo (BuF) v Diables Noirs (Con)
3-0, 0-1 (agg 3-1)
Real Bamako (Mli) v Rivers United (Nga)
0-0, 0-4 (agg 0-4)
Royal Leopards (Swa) v AS Vita (DRC)
0-1, 1-3 (agg 1-4)
Saint-Louisienne (Reu) v Bidvest Wits (SAf)
2-1, 1-3 (agg 3-4)
Sony Ela Nguema (EqG) v Al Merreikh (Sud)
0-1, 1-4 (agg 1-5)
Tanda (IvC) v AS FAN (Nig)
3-0, 1-3 (agg 4-3)
Tusker (Ken) v AS Port-Louis 2000 (Mts)
1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Wa All Stars (Gha) v Al Ahli Tripoli (Lby)
1-3, 0-2 (agg 1-5)
Zanaco (Zam) v APR (Rwa)
0-0, 1-0 (agg 1-0)
Zimamoto (Zan) v Ferroviario Beira (Moz)
2-1, 1-3 (agg 3-4)

**Byes to 1st round:** *Al Ahly (Egy), Al Hilal Omdurman (Sud), Esperance Tunis (Tun), Etoile Sahel (Tun), Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf), TP Mazembe (DRC), USM Alger (Alg), Wydad Casablanca (Mor), Zamalek (Egy)*

### CONFEDERATION CUP

#### Preliminary round

*1st legs - Feb10-12; 2nd legs - Feb17-19*
Akanda (Gab) v Renaissance du Congo (DRC)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Al Hilal Benghazi (Lby) v Ulinzi Stars (Ken)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Ulinzi Stars 5-4 on pens)
Al Hilal Obayed (Sud) v St Michel United (Sey)
2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0)
APEJES Academy (Cam) v Niarry Tally (Sen)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2, APEJES on away goals)
Bechem United (Gha) v MC Alger (Alg)
2-1, 1-4 (agg 3-5)
Defence Force (Eth) v YOSA (Cam)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Douanes (Nig) v Ittihad Tanger (Mor)
1-2, 0-1 (agg 1-3)
Elgeco (Mad) v SuperSport United (SAf)
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
Etoile du Congo (Con) v Racing de Micomeseng (EqG)
2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0)
Ifeanyi Ubah (Nga) v Al Masry (Egy)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Al Masry 3-0 on pens)
KVZ (Zan) v Le Messager Ngozi (Bdi)
2-1, 0-3 (agg 2-4)
Maghreb Fes (Mor) v CARA (Con)
3-0, 0-2 (agg 3-2)
Monrovia Club Breweries (Lbr) v JS Kabylie (Alg)
3-0, 0-4 (agg 3-4)
Orapa United (Bot) v Mbabane Swallows (Swa)
0-1, 2-3 (agg 2-4)
Pamplemousses (Mts) v Ngezi Platinum (Zim)
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Platinum Stars (SAf) v Uniao Desp do Songo (Moz)
1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
RSLAF (SLe) v Wikki Tourists (Nga)
2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1)
Sonabel (BuF) v SC Gagnoa (IvC)
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Vipers (Uga) v Volcan (Com)
0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1, Vipers on away goals)
Wau Salaam (SSu) v Rayon Sports (Rwa)
0-4, 0-2 (agg 0-6)

**Byes to 1st round:** *Al Ahli Shendi (Sud), AS Kaloum (Gui), ASEC Abidjan (IvC), Azam (Tan), Club Africain (Tun), CS Sfaxien (Tun), Djoliba (Mli), Onze Createurs (Mli), Recreativo Libolo (Ang), Sanga Balende (DRC), Smouha (Egy), Zesco United (Zam)*

## CONCACAF

### CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

#### Quarter-finals

*1st legs - Feb 21-23; 2nd legs - Feb 28-Mar 2*
Dallas (USA) v Arabe Unido (Pan)
4-0, 1-2 (agg 5-2)
New York Red Bulls (USA) v
Vancouver Whitecaps (Can) 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Saprissa (CR) v Pachuca (Mex)
0-0, 0-4 (agg 0-4)
Tigres UANL (Mex) v Pumas UNAM (Mex)
1-1, 3-0 (agg 4-1)

### ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

**2016-17 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parham (C) | 18 | 14 | 2 | 2 | 45 | 15 | 44 |
| Hoppers | 18 | 11 | 4 | 3 | 41 | 16 | 37 |
| Grenades | 18 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 33 | 19 | 36 |
| Old Road | 18 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 40 | 27 | 32 |
| Empire | 18 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 31 | 29 | 23 |
| Pigotts Bullets | 18 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 22 | 27 | 23 |
| Tryum | 18 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 23 | 35 | 19 |
| SAP[1] | 18 | 5 | 3 | 10 | 24 | 33 | 18 |
| Liberta (R) | 18 | 4 | 0 | 14 | 15 | 46 | 12 |
| Glanvilles (R) | 18 | 2 | 3 | 13 | 18 | 45 | 9 |

[1]*Enter rel/prom play-offs*

### TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

**2016-17 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Central (C) | 18 | 15 | 2 | 1 | 41 | 14 | 47 |
| W Connection | 18 | 15 | 1 | 2 | 50 | 13 | 46 |
| SJ Jabloteh | 18 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 32 | 23 | 29 |
| Ma Pau Stars | 18 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 33 | 29 | 28 |
| Club Sando | 18 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 33 | 34 | 25 |
| Police | 18 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 36 | 35 | 20 |
| Defence Force[1] | 17 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 24 | 30 | 20 |
| St Ann's Rngrs | 18 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 23 | 39 | 17 |
| Caledonia Utd | 18 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 19 | 32 | 12 |
| Point Fortin[1] | 17 | 1 | 3 | 13 | 17 | 59 | 6 |

[1]*Defence Force v Point Fortin - game abandoned due to floodlight failure*

## SOUTH AMERICA

### LIBERTADORES CUP

#### 3rd qualifying round

*1st legs - Feb15/16; 2nd legs - Feb 22/23*
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) v Deportivo Capiata (Par)
3-3, 1-0 (agg 4-3)
Botafogo (Bra) v Olimpia (Par)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Botafogo 3-1 on pens)
Junior (Col) v Atletico Tucuman (Arg)
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
Union Espanola (Chl) v The Strongest (Bol)
1-1, 0-5 (agg 1-6)

● *The winners have qualified for the group stage; the 2 losing teams with the best record[1], Olimpia & Junior, enter Sudamericana Cup in the 2nd rnd*
*[1]Criteria in descending order of importance: a) nominal points gained (i.e. 3pts for a win etc) b) goal difference c) goals scored d) away goals scored e) CONMEBOL ranking*

## EUROPE

### EUROPA LEAGUE

#### 1st knockout round (last 32)

*1st legs - Feb16; 2nd legs - Feb 22/23*
Anderlecht (Blg) v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus)
2-0, 1-3 (agg 3-3, Anderlecht on away goals)
Astra (Rom) v Genk (Blg)
2-2, 0-1 (agg 2-3)
Athletic Bilbao (Spa) v APOEL (Cyp)
3-2, 0-2 (agg 3-4)
AZ Alkmaar (Hol) v Lyon (Fra)
1-4, 1-7 (agg 2-11)
Celta Vigo (Spa) v Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr)
0-1, 2-0 (aet) (agg 2-1)
Gent (Blg) v Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)
1-0, 2-2 (agg 3-2)
Hapoel Beer Sheva (Isr) v Besiktas (Tur)
1-3, 1-2 (agg 2-5)
Krasnodar (Rus) v Fenerbahce (Tur)
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Legia Warsaw (Pol) v Ajax (Hol)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Ludogorets (Bul) v Copenhagen (Den)
1-2, 0-0 (agg 1-2)
Manchester United (Eng) v Saint-Etienne (Fra)
3-0, 1-0 (agg 4-0)
Monchengladbach (Ger) v Fiorentina (Ita)
0-1, 4-2 (agg 4-3)
Olympiakos (Gre) v Osmanlispor (Tur)
0-0, 3-0 (agg 3-0)
PAOK Salonika (Gre) v Schalke (Ger)
0-3, 1-1 (agg 1-4)
Rostov (Rus) v Sparta Prague (CzR)
4-0, 1-1 (agg 5-1)
Villarreal (Spa) v Roma (Ita)
0-4, 1-0 (agg 1-4)

## ASIA

### AFC CUP

#### Play-off round

*1st legs - Jan 30-Feb 21; 2nd legs - Feb 6-28*
Boeung Ket Angkor (Cam) v Lao Toyota (Lao)
1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1)
Dordoi (Kyr) v Khosilot (Taj)
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Phnom Penh Crown (Cam) v Home United (Sin)
3-4, 0-3 (agg 3-7)
Shabab Al Khalil (Pal) v Al Suwaiq (Oma)
2-1, 1-3 (agg 3-4)
Valencia (Mdv) v Mohun Bagan (Ind)
1-1, 1-4 (agg 2-5)

● *The winners have qualified for the group stage*

### SRI LANKA

**2016-17 – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colombo (C) | 7 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 13 | 5 | 16 |
| Renown | 7 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 14 | 7 | 15 |
| Blue Star | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 9 | 14 |
| Army | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 25 | 12 | 13 |
| New Young's | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 8 |
| Air Force | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 5 |
| Navy | 7 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 19 | 4 |
| Solid | 7 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 20 | 4 |

**KEY TO TABLES**
(C) = champions (R) = relegated

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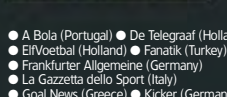



● A Bola (Portugal) ● De Telegraaf (Holland)
● ElfVoetbal (Holland) ● Fanatik (Turkey)
● Frankfurter Allgemeine (Germany)
● La Gazzetta dello Sport (Italy)
● Goal News (Greece) ● Kicker (Germany)
● Marca (Spain) ● Nemzeti Sport (Hungary)
● So Foot (France) ● Sport-Express (Russia)
● Sport/Foot (Belgium) ● TIPS Bladet (Denmark)
● World Soccer (UK)

## ATLANTA UNITED

### GOALKEEPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 25 | Alec **KANN** | (26) 08.08.90 |
| 23 | Alexandros **TABAKIS** (Gre) | (24) 08.12.92 |

### DEFENDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 22 | Mikey **AMBROSE** | (23) 05.10.93 |
| 21 | Mark **BLOOM** | (29) 25.11.87 |
| 4 | Greg **GARZA** | (25) 16.08.91 |
| 5 | Leandro **GONZALEZ PIREZ** (Arg) | (25) 26.02.92 |
| 27 | Zach **LOYD** | (29) 18.07.87 |
| 2 | Tyrone **MEARS** (Eng) | (34) 18.02.83 |
| 3 | Michael **PARKHURST** | (33) 24.01.84 |
| 6 | Miles **ROBINSON** | (20) 14.03.97 |
| 26 | Anton **WALKES** (Eng) | (20) 08.02.97 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10 | Miguel **ALMIRON** (Par) | (23) 10.02.94 |
| 30 | Andrew **CARLETON** | (16) 22.06.00 |
| 14 | Carlos **CARMONA** (Chl) | (30) 21.01.87 |
| 20 | Chris **GOSLIN** | (16) 12.05.00 |
| 24 | Julian **GRESSEL** (Ger) | (23) 16.12.93 |
| 13 | Harrison **HEATH** (Eng) | (21) 06.03.96 |
| 8 | Kevin **KRATZ** (Ger) | (30) 21.01.87 |
| 18 | Jeff **LARENTOWICZ** | (33) 05.08.83 |
| 16 | Chris **McCANN** (Rol) | (29) 21.07.87 |
| 28 | Andrew **WHEELER-OMIUNU** | (22) 30.11.94 |

### FORWARDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | Yamil **ASAD** (Arg) | (22) 27.07.94 |
| 9 | Kenwyne **JONES** (T&T) | (32) 05.10.84 |
| 7 | Josef **MARTINEZ** (Ven) | (23) 19.05.93 |
| 29 | Jacob **PETERSON** | (31) 27.01.86 |
| 19 | Brandon **VAZQUEZ** | (18) 14.10.98 |
| 15 | Hector **VILLALBA** (Arg) | (23) 10.02.94 |

### COACH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Gerardo **MARTINO** (Arg) | (54) 20.11.62 |

## CHICAGO FIRE

### GOALKEEPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Jorge **BAVA** (Uru) | (35) 02.08.81 |
| 30 | Stefan **CLEVELAND** | (22) 25.05.94 |
| 28 | Matt **LAMPSON** | (27) 06.09.89 |

### DEFENDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 16 | Jonathan **CAMPBELL** | (23) 27.06.93 |
| 22 | Patrick **DOODY** | (24) 22.04.92 |
| 5 | Michael **HARRINGTON** | (31) 24.01.86 |
| 4 | Johan **KAPPELHOF** (Hol) | (26) 05.08.90 |
| 66 | Joao **MEIRA** (Por) | (29) 30.04.87 |
| 3 | Brandon **VINCENT** | (22) 01.05.94 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | Arturo **ALVAREZ** (EIS) | (31) 28.06.85 |
| 13 | Brandt **BRONICO** | (21) 20.06.95 |
| 15 | Joey **CALISTRI** | (23) 20.11.93 |
| 18 | Drew **CONNER** | (23) 18.02.94 |
| 17 | Collin **FERNANDEZ** (Per) | (20) 13.02.97 |
| 7 | John **GOOSSENS** (Hol) | (28) 25.07.88 |
| 20 | Daniel **JOHNSON** | (21) 08.09.95 |
| 19 | **JUNINHO** (Bra) | (28) 08.01.89 |
| 6 | Dax **McCARTY** | (29) 30.04.87 |
| 14 | Djordje **MIHAILOVIC** | (18) 10.11.98 |
| 2 | Matt **POLSTER** | (23) 08.06.93 |

### FORWARDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | David **ACCAM** (Gha) | (26) 28.09.90 |
| 10 | David **ARSHAKYAN** (Arm) | (22) 16.08.94 |
| 8 | Michael **DE LEEUW** (Hol) | (30) 07.10.86 |
| 23 | Nemanja **NIKOLIC** (Hun) | (29) 31.12.87 |
| 9 | Luis **SOLIGNAC** (Arg) | (26) 16.02.91 |

### COACH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Veljko **PAUNOVIC** (Ser) | (39) 21.08.77 |

## COLORADO RAPIDS

### GOALKEEPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | John **BERNER** | (26) 14.02.91 |
| 1 | Tim **HOWARD** | (38) 06.03.79 |
| 18 | Zac **MacMATH** | (25) 07.08.91 |
| 31 | Cody **MIZELL** | (25) 30.09.91 |

### DEFENDFERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Marc **BURCH** | (32) 07.05.84 |
| 23 | Bobby **BURLING** | (32) 15.10.84 |
| 26 | Dennis **CASTILLO** (CR) | (23) 30.04.93 |
| 24 | Kortne **FORD** | (21) 26.01.96 |
| 94 | Marlon **HAIRSTON** | (23) 23.03.94 |
| 3 | Eric **MILLER** | (24) 15.01.93 |
| 44 | Axel **SJOBERG** (Swe) | (26) 08.03.91 |
| 33 | Jared **WATTS** | (25) 03.02.92 |
| 5 | Mekeil **WILLIAMS** (T&T) | (26) 24.07.90 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 21 | Bismark **ADJEI-BOATENG** (Gha) | (22) 10.05.94 |
| 22 | Micheal **AZIRA** (Uga) | (29) 22.08.87 |
| 6 | Sam **CRONIN** | (30) 12.12.86 |
| - | Gilbert **KOOMSON** (Gha) | (22) 09.09.94 |
| 20 | Ricardo **PEREZ** (Mex) | (21) 30.05.95 |
| 8 | Dillon **POWERS** | (26) 14.02.91 |
| 17 | Dillon **SERNA** | (22) 25.03.94 |

### FORWARDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14 | Dominique **BADJI** (Sen) | (24) 16.10.92 |
| 29 | Caleb **CALVERT** | (20) 22.10.96 |
| 9 | Kevin **DOYLE** (Rol) | (33) 18.09.83 |
| 11 | Shkelzen **GASHI** (Alb) | (28) 15.07.88 |
| 16 | Alan **GORDON** | (35) 16.10.81 |

### COACH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Pablo **MASTROENI** | (40) 29.08.76 |

## COLUMBUS CREW

### GOALKEEPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 30 | Logan **KETTERER** | (23) 09.11.93 |
| 23 | Zack **STEFFEN** | (21) 02.04.95 |
| 41 | Brad **STUVER** | (25) 16.04.91 |

### DEFENDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 17 | Lalas **ABUBAKAR** (Gha) | (22) 24.12.94 |
| 25 | Harrison **AFFUL** (Gha) | (30) 24.07.86 |
| 21 | Alex **CROGNALE** | (22) 27.08.94 |
| 14 | Waylon **FRANCIS** (CR) | (26) 20.09.90 |
| 31 | Connor **MALONEY** | (21) 18.05.95 |
| 18 | Cristian **MARTINEZ** (Pan) | (20) 06.02.97 |
| 4 | Jonathan **MENSAH** (Gha) | (26) 13.07.90 |
| 24 | Nicolai **NAESS** (Nor) | (24) 18.01.93 |
| 2 | Jukka **RAITALA** (Fin) | (28) 15.09.88 |
| 22 | Gaston **SAURO** (Arg) | (27) 23.02.90 |
| 3 | Josh **WILLIAMS** | (28) 18.04.88 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8 | Mohammed **ABU** (Gha) | (25) 14.11.91 |
| 7 | **ARTUR** (Bra) | (21) 11.03.96 |
| 5 | Dilly **DUKA** | (27) 15.09.89 |
| 13 | Ethan **FINLAY** | (26) 06.08.90 |
| 16 | Hector **JIMENEZ** | (28) 03.11.88 |
| 28 | Niko **HANSEN** (Den) | (22) 13.09.94 |
| 29 | Marshall **HOLLINGSWORTH** | (23) 06.08.93 |
| 10 | Federico **HIGUAIN** (Arg) | (32) 25.10.84 |
| 9 | Justin **MERAM** (Irq) | (28) 04.12.88 |
| 27 | Abuchi **OBINWA** | (20) 15.01.97 |
| 26 | Ben **SWANSON** | (19) 18.07.97 |
| 6 | Tony **TCHANI** (Cam) | (27) 13.04.89 |
| 20 | Wil **TRAPP** | (24) 15.01.93 |

### FORWARDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | Adam **JAHN** | (26) 05.01.91 |
| 11 | Ola **KAMARA** (Nor) | (27) 15.10.89 |

### COACH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Gregg **BERHALTER** | (43) 01.08.73 |

## DALLAS

### GOALKEEPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Jesse **GONZALEZ** (Mex) | (21) 25.05.95 |
| 18 | Chris **SEITZ** | (30) 12.03.87 |

### DEFENDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 22 | Reggie **CANNON** | (18) 11.06.98 |
| 6 | Anibal **CHALA** (Ecu) | (20) 09.05.96 |
| 31 | Maynor **FIGUEROA** (Hon) | (33) 02.05.83 |
| 2 | Hernan **GRANA** (Arg) | (31) 12.04.85 |
| 33 | Aaron **GUILLEN** (Mex) | (23) 23.06.93 |
| 14 | Atiba **HARRIS** (StK) | (32) 09.01.85 |
| 24 | Matt **HEDGES** | (26) 01.04.90 |
| 26 | Walker **HUME** | (23) 21.08.93 |
| 25 | Walker **ZIMMERMAN** | (23) 19.05.93 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 23 | Kellyn **ACOSTA** | (21) 24.07.95 |
| 21 | Michael **BARRIOS** (Col) | (25) 21.04.91 |
| 5 | Carlos **CERMENO** (Ven) | (21) 08.08.95 |
| 10 | Mauro **DIAZ** (Arg) | (26) 10.03.91 |
| 7 | Carlos **GRUEZO** (Ecua) | (21) 19.04.95 |
| 15 | Jacori **HAYES** | (21) 29.06.95 |
| 12 | Ryan **HOLLINGSHEAD** | (25) 16.04.91 |
| 20 | Roland **LAMAH** (Blg) | (29) 31.12.87 |
| 11 | Javier **MORALES** (Arg) | (37) 10.01.80 |
| 19 | Paxton **POMYKAL** | (17) 17.12.99 |
| 8 | Victor **ULLOA** (Mex) | (25) 04.03.92 |

### FIORWARDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | Tesho **AKINDELE** (Can) | (24) 31.03.92 |
| 9 | Cristian **COLMAN** (Par) | (23) 26.02.94 |
| 16 | Coy **CRAFT** | (19) 23.05.97 |
| 27 | Jesus **FERREIRA** (Col) | (16) 24.12.00 |
| 28 | Adonijah **REID** (Can) | (17) 13.08.99 |
| 29 | Bryan **REYNOLDS** | (15) 28.06.01 |
| 37 | Maximiliano **URRUTI** (Arg) | (26) 22.02.91 |

### COACH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Oscar **PAREJA** (Col) | (48) 10.08.68 |

## DC UNITED

### GOALKEEPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 28 | Bill **HAMID** | (26) 25.11.90 |
| 24 | Eric **KLENOFSKY** | (22) 20.09.94 |
| 1 | Travis **WORRA** | (23) 09.04.93 |

### DEFENDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 15 | Steve **BIRNBAUM** | (26) 23.01.91 |
| 32 | Bobby **BOSWELL** | (34) 15.03.83 |
| 21 | Chris **DURKIN** | (17) 08.02.00 |
| 5 | Sean **FRANKLIN** | (32) 21.03.85 |
| 2 | Taylor **KEMP** | (26) 23.07.90 |
| 3 | Chris **ODOI-ATSEM** | (21) 28.05.95 |
| 6 | Kofi **OPARE** (Gha) | (26) 12.10.90 |
| 20 | Jalen **ROBINSON** | (22) 08.05.94 |
| 31 | Maxim **TISSOT** (Can) | (24) 13.04.92 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10 | Luciano **ACOSTA** (Arg) | (22) 31.05.94 |
| 33 | Julian **BUSCHER** (Ger) | (23) 22.04.93 |
| 14 | Nick **DeLEON** | (26) 17.05.90 |
| 23 | Ian **HARKES** | (22) 08.03.95 |
| 25 | Jared **JEFFREY** | (26) 14.06.90 |
| 12 | Patrick **NYARKO** (Gha) | (31) 15.01.86 |
| 8 | Lloyd **SAM** (Gha) | (32) 27.09.84 |
| 7 | Marcelo **SARVAS** (Bra) | (35) 16.10.81 |
| 26 | Rob **VINCENT** (Eng) | (26) 26.10.90 |

### FORWARDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 45 | Alhaji **KAMARA** (SLe) | (22) 16.04.94 |
| 11 | Sebastien **LE TOUX** (Fra) | (32) 10.01.84 |
| 16 | Patrick **MULLINS** | (25) 05.02.92 |
| 13 | Lamar **NEAGLE** | (29) 07.05.87 |
| 9 | Jose Guillermo **ORTIZ** (CR) | (24) 20.06.92 |
| 18 | Chris **ROLFE** | (34) 17.01.83 |

### COACH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Ben **OLSEN** | (39) 03.05.77 |

## HOUSTON DYNAMO

### GOALKEEPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 24 | Calle **BROWN** | (24) 01.07.92 |
| 1 | Tyler **DERIC** | (28) 30.08.88 |
| 31 | Joe **WILLIS** | (28) 10.08.88 |

### DEFENDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | **AGUS** (Spa) | (31) 03.05.85 |
| 2 | Jalil **ANIBABA** | (28) 19.10.88 |
| 7 | DaMarcus **BEASLEY** | (34) 24.05.82 |
| 20 | A J **DeLaGARZA** (Gum) | (29) 04.11.87 |
| 16 | Kevin **GARCIA** | (26) 21.08.90 |
| 22 | **LEONARDO** (Bra) | (29) 05.02.88 |
| 3 | Adolfo **MACHADO** (Pan) | (32) 14.02.85 |
| 15 | Dylan **REMICK** | (25) 19.05.91 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14 | **ALEX** (Bra) | (28) 15.12.88 |
| 6 | Eric **ALEXANDER** | (28) 14.04.88 |
| 5 | Juan David **CABEZAS** (Col) | (26) 27.02.91 |
| 13 | Ricardo **CLARK** | (34) 10.02.83 |
| 23 | Jose **ESCALANTE** (Hon) | (21) 29.05.95 |
| 27 | Boniek **GARCIA** (Hon) | (32) 04.09.84 |
| 29 | Christian **LUCATERO** | (19) 17.06.97 |

### FORWARDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 17 | Alberth **ELIS** (Hon) | (21) 12.02.96 |
| 19 | Mauro **MANOTAS** (Col) | (21) 15.07.95 |
| 12 | Romell **QUIOTO** (Hon) | (25) 09.08.91 |
| 10 | Vicente **SANCHEZ** (Uru) | (37) 07.12.79 |
| 9 | Erick **TORRES** (Mex) | (24) 19.01.93 |
| 11 | Andrew **WENGER** | (26) 25.12.90 |

### COACH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Wilmer **CABRERA** (Col) | (49) 15.09.67 |

## LA GALAXY

### GOALKEEPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 31 | Clement **DIOP** (Fra) | (23) 12.10.93 |
| 1 | Dan **KENNEDY** | (34) 22.07.82 |
| 12 | Brian **ROWE** | (28) 16.11.88 |

### DEFENDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 21 | Hugo **ARELLANO** | (19) 05.03.98 |
| 3 | Ashley **COLE** (Eng) | (36) 20.12.80 |
| 53 | Bradley **DIALLO** (Fra) | (26) 20.07.90 |
| 14 | Robbie **ROGERS** | (29) 12.05.87 |
| 4 | Dave **ROMNEY** | (23) 12.06.93 |
| 16 | Nathan **SMITH** | (22) 18.10.94 |
| 5 | Daniel **STERES** | (26) 11.11.90 |
| 37 | Jelle **VAN DAMME** (Blg) | (33) 10.10.83 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | Romain **ALESSANDRINI** (Fra) | (27) 03.04.89 |
| 24 | Emmanuel **BOATENG** (Gha) | (23) 17.01.94 |
| 25 | Rafael **GARCIA** | (28) 19.12.88 |
| 6 | Baggio **HUSIDIC** (Bos) | (29) 19.05.87 |
| 8 | **JOAO PEDRO** (Por) | (23) 03.04.93 |
| 13 | Jermaine **JONES** | (35) 03.11.81 |
| 17 | Sebastian **LLETGET** | (24) 03.09.92 |
| 40 | Raul **MENDIOLA** (Mex) | (22) 18.05.94 |
| 19 | Jaime **VILLARREAL** | (21) 23.06.95 |
| 33 | Jose **VILLARREAL** | (23) 10.09.93 |

### FORWARDS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10 | Giovani **DOS SANTOS** (Mex) | (27) 11.05.89 |
| 38 | Bradford **JAMIESON** | (20) 18.10.96 |
| 15 | Ariel **LASSITER** (CR) | (22) 27.09.94 |
| 32 | Jack **McBEAN** | (22) 15.12.94 |
| 11 | Gyasi **ZARDES** | (25) 02.09.91 |

### COACH

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Curt **ONALFO** | (47) 19.11.69 |

# USA: MLS 2017

## MINNESOTA UNITED

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 1 | John **ALVBAGE** (Swe) | (34) 10.08.82 |
| 24 | Patrick **McLAIN** | (28) 22.08.88 |
| 33 | Bobby **SHUTTLEWORTH** | (29) 13.05.87 |
| 35 | Alec **FERRELL** | (23) 03.03.94 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 5 | Francisco **CALVO** (CR) | (24) 08.07.92 |
| 2 | Justin **DAVIS** | (28) 06.05.88 |
| 6 | Vadim **DEMIDOV** (Nor) | (30) 10.10.86 |
| 12 | Joseph **GREENSPAN** | (24) 12.09.92 |
| 14 | Brent **KALLMAN** | (26) 04.10.90 |
| 4 | Jermaine **TAYLOR** (Jam) | (32) 14.01.85 |
| 3 | Jerome **THIESSON** (Swi) | (29) 06.08.87 |
| 22 | Kevin **VENEGAS** | (27) 29.07.89 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 10 | Miguel **IBARRA** | (27) 15.03.90 |
| 7 | **IBSON** (Bra) | (33) 07.11.83 |
| 16 | Bashkim **KADRII** (Den) | (25) 09.07.91 |
| 17 | Collin **MARTIN** | (22) 09.11.94 |
| 18 | Kevin **MOLINO** (T&T) | (26) 17.06.90 |
| 8 | Mohammed **SAEID** (Swe) | (26) 24.12.90 |
| 20 | Rasmus **SCHULLER** (Fin) | (25) 18.06.91 |
| 27 | Tanner **THOMPSON** | (22) 08.12.94 |
| 11 | Johan **VENEGAS** (CR) | (28) 27.11.88 |
| 26 | Collen **WARNER** | (28) 24.06.88 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 23 | Bernardo **ANOR** (Ven) | (28) 28.05.88 |
| 9 | Abu **DANLADI** (Gha) | (21) 10.10.95 |
| 13 | Thomas **DE VILLARDI** (Fra) | (22) 27.03.94 |
| 45 | Josh **GATT** | (25) 29.08.91 |
| 21 | Christian **RAMIREZ** | (25) 04.04.91 |
| **COACH** | | |
| | Adrian **HEATH** (Eng) | (56) 11.01.61 |

## MONTREAL IMPACT (Can)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 1 | Evan **BUSH** | (31) 06.03.86 |
| 40 | Maxime **CREPEAU** (Can) | (22) 11.05.94 |
| 22 | Eric **KRONBERG** | (33) 07.06.83 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 14 | Adrian **ARREGUI** (Arg) | (24) 12.08.92 |
| 36 | Víctor **CABRERA** (Arg) | (24) 07.02.93 |
| 6 | Hassoun **CAMARA** (Fra) | (33) 03.02.84 |
| 23 | Laurent **CIMAN** (Blg) | (31) 05.08.85 |
| 18 | Chris **DUVALL** | (25) 10.09.91 |
| 26 | Kyle **FISHER** | (22) 19.06.94 |
| 5 | Wandrille **LEFEVRE** (Can) | (27) 17.12.89 |
| 2 | Ambroise **OYONGO** (Cam) | (25) 22.06.91 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 25 | Louis **BELAND-GOYETTE** (Can) | (22) 15.09.94 |
| 30 | Hernan **BERNARDELLO** (Arg) | (30) 03.08.86 |
| 8 | Patrice **BERNIER** (Can) | (37) 23.09.79 |
| 17 | David **CHOINIERE** (Can) | (20) 07.02.97 |
| 33 | Marco **DONADEL** (Ita) | (33) 21.04.83 |
| 3 | Daniel **LOVITZ** | (25) 27.08.91 |
| 16 | Calum **MALLACE** (Sco) | (26) 01.10.90 |
| 10 | Ignacio **PIATTI** (Arg) | (32) 04.02.85 |
| 28 | Shamit **SHOME** (Can) | (19) 05.09.97 |
| 15 | Andres **ROMERO** (Arg) | (27) 29.10.89 |
| 13 | Ballou Jean-Yves **TABLA** (Can) | (17) 31.03.99 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 27 | Nick **DePUY** | (22) 14.11.94 |
| 24 | Anthony **JACKSON-HAMEL** (Can) | (23) 03.08.93 |
| 21 | Matteo **MANCOSU** (Ita) | (32) 22.12.84 |
| 7 | Dominic **ODURO** (Gha) | (31) 13.08.85 |
| 19 | Michael **SALAZAR** (Blz) | (24) 15.10.92 |
| **COACH** | | |
| | Mauro **BIELLO** (Can) | (44) 08.08.72 |

## NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 1 | Cody **CROPPER** | (24) 16.02.93 |
| 18 | Brad **KNIGHTON** | (32) 06.02.85 |
| 30 | Matt **TURNER** | (22) 24.06.94 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 4 | Benjamin **ANGOUA** (IvC) | (30) 28.11.86 |
| 2 | Andrew **FARRELL** | (24) 02.04.92 |
| 19 | Antonio **MLINAR DELAMEA** (Sln) | (25) 10.06.91 |
| 27 | Joshua **SMITH** (Ger) | (24) 10.03.92 |
| 8 | Chris **TIERNEY** | (31) 09.01.86 |
| 15 | Je-Vaughn **WATSON** (Jam) | (33) 22.10.83 |
| 28 | London **WOODBERRY** | (25) 28.05.91 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 6 | Scott **CALDWELL** | (26) 15.03.91 |
| 14 | Diego **FAGUNDEZ** (Uru) | (22) 14.02.95 |
| 21 | Zachary **HERIVAUX** (Hai) | (21) 01.02.96 |
| 16 | Daigo **KOBAYASHI** (Jap) | (34) 19.02.83 |
| 12 | Xavier **KOUASSI** (IvC) | (27) 28.12.89 |
| 24 | Lee **NGUYEN** | (30) 07.10.86 |
| 11 | Kelyn **ROWE** | (25) 25.12.91 |
| 33 | Donnie **SMITH** | (26) 07.12.90 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 17 | Juan **AGUDELO** | (24) 23.11.92 |
| 10 | Teal **BUNBURY** | (27) 27.02.90 |
| 23 | Kei **KAMARA** (SLe) | (32) 01.09.84 |
| 88 | Femi **HOLLINGER-JANZEN** (Ben) | (23) 14.12.93 |
| 7 | Brian **WRIGHT** (Can) | (21) 24.03.95 |
| **COACH** | | |
| | Jay **HEAPS** | (40) 02.08.76 |

## NEW YORK CITY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 25 | Eirik **JOHANSEN** (Nor) | (24) 12.07.92 |
| 1 | Sean **JOHNSON** | (27) 31.05.89 |
| 24 | Andre **RAWLS** | (25) 20.12.91 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 27 | R J **ALLEN** | (26) 17.04.90 |
| 13 | Frederic **BRILLANT** (Fra) | (31) 26.06.85 |
| 6 | Alexander **CALLENS** (Per) | (24) 04.05.92 |
| 4 | Maxime **CHANOT** (Lux) | (27) 21.01.90 |
| 52 | Shannon **GOMEZ** (T&T) | (20) 05.10.96 |
| 22 | Ronald **MATARRITA** (CR) | (22) 09.07.94 |
| 2 | Ben **SWEAT** | (25) 04.09.91 |
| 3 | Ethan **WHITE** | (26) 01.01.91 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 14 | Kwame **AWUAH** (Can) | (21) 02.12.95 |
| - | Jeremy **DeGRAFFENREIDT** | (22) 11.09.94 |
| 99 | Miguel **CAMARGO** (Pan) | (23) 09.05.93 |
| 11 | Jack **HARRISON** (Eng) | (20) 20.11.96 |
| 30 | Yangel **HERRERA** (Ven) | (19) 07.01.98 |
| 5 | Mikey **LOPEZ** | (24) 20.02.93 |
| 15 | Tommy **McNAMARA** | (26) 06.02.91 |
| 10 | Maxi **MORALEZ** (Arg) | (30) 27.02.87 |
| 21 | Andrea **PIRLO** (Ita) | (37) 19.05.79 |
| 8 | Alexander **RING** (Fin) | (25) 09.04.91 |
| 12 | John **STERTZER** | (26) 04.10.90 |
| 23 | Rodney **WALLACE** (CR) | (28) 17.06.88 |
| - | Christopher **WINGATE** | (22) 03.07.94 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| - | Jalen **BROWN** | (22) 23.01.95 |
| 17 | Jonathan **LEWIS** | (19) 04.06.97 |
| 9 | Sean **OKOLI** | (24) 03.02.93 |
| 19 | Khiry **SHELTON** | (23) 26.06.93 |
| 7 | David **VILLA** (Spa) | (35) 03.12.81 |
| **COACH** | | |
| | Patrick **VIEIRA** (Fra) | (40) 23.06.76 |

## NEW YORK RED BULLS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 40 | Rafael **DIAZ** (DoR) | (25) 08.10.91 |
| 24 | Evan **LOURO** | (21) 19.01.96 |
| 18 | Ryan **MEARA** | (26) 15.11.90 |
| 31 | Luis **ROBLES** | (32) 11.05.84 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 3 | Gideon **BAAH** (Gha) | (25) 01.10.91 |
| 20 | Justin **BILYEU** | (23) 03.02.94 |
| 78 | Aurelien **COLLIN** (Fra) | (31) 08.03.86 |
| 5 | Connor **LADE** | (27) 16.11.89 |
| 92 | Kemar **LAWRENCE** (Jam) | (24) 17.09.92 |
| 33 | Aaron **LONG** | (24) 12.10.92 |
| 62 | Michael Amir **MURILLO** (Pan) | (21) 11.02.96 |
| 47 | Hassan **NDAM** (Cam) | (18) 29.10.98 |
| 55 | Damien **PERRINELLE** (Fra) | (33) 12.09.83 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 4 | Tyler **ADAMS** | (18) 14.02.99 |
| 17 | Arun **BASULJEVIC** | (21) 17.12.95 |
| 27 | Sean **DAVIS** | (24) 08.02.93 |
| 7 | Derrick **ETIENNE** (Hai) | (20) 25.11.96 |
| 16 | Sacha **KLJESTAN** | (31) 09.09.85 |
| 8 | Felipe **MARTINS** (Bra) | (26) 30.09.90 |
| 6 | Dan **METZGER** | (23) 06.08.93 |
| 77 | Daniel **ROYER** (Aut) | (26) 22.05.90 |
| 30 | Gonzalo **VERON** (Arg) | (27) 24.12.89 |
| 15 | Sal **ZIZZO** | (29) 03.04.87 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 21 | Brandon **ALLEN** | (23) 08.10.93 |
| 13 | Mike **GRELLA** | (30) 23.01.87 |
| 19 | Alex **MUYL** | (21) 30.09.95 |
| 99 | Bradley **WRIGHT-PHILLIPS** (Eng) | (32) 12.03.85 |
| **COACH** | | |
| | Jesse **MARSCH** | (43) 08.11.73 |

## ORLANDO CITY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 1 | Joe **BENDIK** | (27) 25.04.89 |
| 36 | Earl **EDWARDS** | (25) 24.01.92 |
| 28 | Josh **SAUNDERS** (PR) | (36) 21.03.81 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 4 | Jose **AJA** (Uru) | (23) 10.05.93 |
| 12 | Kevin **ALSTON** | (28) 05.05.88 |
| 22 | Conor **DONOVAN** | (21) 08.01.96 |
| 94 | Victor **GIRO** (Bra) | (23) 10.03.94 |
| 3 | Seb **HINES** (Eng) | (28) 29.05.88 |
| 44 | David **MATEOS** (Spa) | (22) 22.04.87 |
| 27 | Rafael **RAMOS** (Por) | (22) 09.01.95 |
| 29 | Tommy **REDDING** | (20) 24.01.97 |
| 2 | Jonathan **SPECTOR** | (30) 01.03.86 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 5 | Servando **CARRASCO** | (28) 13.08.88 |
| 43 | Pierre **DA SILVA** | (18) 28.07.98 |
| 7 | Cristian **HIGUITA** (Col) | (23) 14.01.94 |
| 8 | Will **JOHNSON** (Can) | (30) 21.01.87 |
| 10 | **KAKA** (Bra) | (24) 22.04.82 |
| 6 | Richie **LARYEA** (Can) | (22) 07.01.95 |
| 23 | Antonio **NOCERINO** (Ita) | (31) 09.04.85 |
| 32 | Matias **PEREZ GARCIA** (Arg) | (32) 13.10.84 |
| 11 | Carlos **RIVAS** (Col) | (22) 15.04.94 |
| 35 | Bryan **ROCHEZ** (Hon) | (22) 01.01.95 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 14 | Giles **BARNES** (Jam) | (28) 05.08.88 |
| 13 | Hadji **BARRY** (Gui) | (24) 08.12.92 |
| 30 | Danny **DEAKIN** | (23) 06.09.93 |
| 9 | Cyle **LARIN** (Can) | (21) 17.04.95 |
| **COACH** | | |
| | Jason **KREIS** | (44) 29.12.72 |

## PHILADELPHIA UNION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 18 | Andre **BLAKE** (Jam) | (26) 21.11.90 |
| 23 | John **McCARTHY** | (24) 04.07.92 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 2 | Warren **CREAVALLE** | (26) 14.08.90 |
| 3 | Jack **ELLIOTT** (Eng) | (21) 24.08.95 |
| 33 | **FABINHO** (Bra) | (32) 16.03.85 |
| 28 | Ray **GADDIS** | (27) 13.01.90 |
| 19 | Aaron **JONES** (Eng) | (22) 12.03.94 |
| 16 | Richie **MARQUEZ** | (24) 26.05.92 |
| 5 | Oguchi **ONYEWU** | (34) 13.05.82 |
| 12 | Keegan **ROSENBERRY** | (23) 11.12.93 |
| 4 | Ken **TRIBBETT** | (25) 25.08.91 |
| 26 | Auston **TRUSTY** | (18) 12.08.98 |
| 32 | Giliano **WIJNALDUM** (Hol) | (24) 31.08.92 |
| 15 | Joshua **YARO** (Gha) | (23) 07.03.94 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 10 | Roland **ALBERG** (Hol) | (26) 06.08.90 |
| 30 | Eric **AYUK** (Cam) | (20) 17.02.97 |
| 11 | Alejandro **BEDOYA** | (29) 29.04.87 |
| 7 | Brian **CARROLL** | (35) 20.07.81 |
| 8 | Maurice **EDU** | (30) 18.04.86 |
| 25 | **ILSINHO** (Bra) | (31) 12.10.85 |
| 21 | Derrick **JONES** (Gha) | (20) 03.03.97 |
| 6 | Haris **MEDUNJANIN** (Bos) | (32) 08.03.85 |
| 24 | Adam **NAJEM** | (22) 19.01.95 |
| 22 | Fafa **PICAULT** | (26) 23.02.91 |
| 13 | Chris **PONTIUS** | (29) 12.05.87 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 9 | Charlie **DAVIES** | (30) 25.06.86 |
| 20 | Marcus **EPPS** | (22) 16.01.95 |
| 14 | Fabian **HERBERS** (Ger) | (23) 17.08.93 |
| 17 | C J **SAPONG** | (28) 27.12.88 |
| 27 | Jay **SIMPSON** (Eng) | (28) 01.12.88 |
| **COACH** | | |
| | Jim **CURTIN** | (37) 23.06.79 |

## PORTLAND TIMBERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 1 | Jeff **ATTINELLA** | (28) 29.09.88 |
| 90 | Jake **GLEESON** (NZ) | (26) 26.06.90 |
| 43 | Kendall **McINTOSH** | (23) 24.01.94 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 5 | Vytautas **ANDRIUSKEVICIUS** (Lit) | (26) 08.10.90 |
| 12 | Gbenga **AROKOYO** (Nga) | (24) 04.09.92 |
| 47 | Rennico **CLARKE** (Jam) | (21) 27.08.95 |
| 32 | Marco **FARFAN** | (18) 12.11.98 |
| 7 | Roy **MILLER** (CR) | (32) 28.11.84 |
| 4 | Chance **MYERS** | (29) 07.12.87 |
| 18 | Amobi **OKUGO** | (26) 13.03.91 |
| 2 | Alvas **POWELL** (Jam) | (22) 18.07.94 |
| 24 | Liam **RIDGEWELL** (Eng) | (32) 21.06.84 |
| 16 | Zarek **VALENTIN** | (25) 06.08.91 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 27 | Dairon **ASPRILLA** (Col) | (24) 25.05.92 |
| 23 | Jack **BARMBY** (Eng) | (22) 14.11.94 |
| 10 | Sebastian **BLANCO** (Arg) | (29) 15.03.88 |
| 21 | Diego **CHARA** (Col) | (30) 05.04.86 |
| 20 | David **GUZMAN** (CR) | (27) 18.02.90 |
| 6 | Darlington **NAGBE** | (26) 19.07.90 |
| 13 | Lawrence **OLUM** (Ken) | (32) 10.07.84 |
| 8 | Diego **VALERI** (Arg) | (30) 01.05.86 |
| 14 | Ben **ZEMANSKI** | (28) 12.05.88 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 9 | Fanendo **ADI** (Nga) | (26) 10.10.90 |
| 19 | Victor **ARBOLEDA** (Col) | (20) 01.01.97 |
| 17 | Jeremy **EBOBISSE** | (20) 14.02.97 |
| 11 | Darren **MATTOCKS** (Jam) | (26) 02.09.90 |
| 99 | Jack **McINERNEY** | (24 ) 05.08.92 |
| **COACH** | | |
| | Caleb **PORTER** | (42) 18.02.75 |

(ages as of 24.03.17)

## REAL SALT LAKE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 1 | Lalo **FERNANDEZ** (Mex) | (24) 16.12.92 |
| 18 | Nick **RIMANDO** | (37) 17.06.79 |
| 30 | Matt **VAN OEKEL** | (30) 20.09.86 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 25 | Danilo **ACOSTA** (Hon) | (19) 07.11.97 |
| 2 | Tony **BELTRAN** | (29) 11.10.87 |
| 15 | Justen **GLAD** | (20) 28.02.97 |
| 4 | David **HORST** | (31) 25.10.85 |
| 21 | Aaron **MAUND** | (26) 19.09.90 |
| 17 | Demar **PHILLIPS** (Jam) | (33) 23.09.83 |
| 28 | Chris **SCHULER** | (29) 06.09.87 |
| 6 | Justin **SCHMIDT** | (23) 02.11.93 |
| 16 | Chris **WINGERT** | (34) 16.06.82 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 70 | Jordan **ALLEN** | (21) 25.04.95 |
| 5 | Kyle **BECKERMAN** | (34) 23.04.82 |
| 29 | Jose **HERNANDEZ** (Mex) | (20) 12.04.96 |
| 12 | Omar **HOLNESS** (Jam) | (23) 13.04.94 |
| 19 | Luke **MULHOLLAND** (Eng) | (28) 07.08.88 |
| 11 | Albert **RUSNAK** (Slk) | (22) 07.07.94 |
| 23 | Sebastian **SAUCEDO** (Mex) | (20) 22.01.97 |
| 20 | Luis **SILVA** | (28) 10.12.88 |
| 8 | Stephen **SUNDAY** (Nga) | (28) 17.09.88 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 13 | Chad **BARRETT** | (31) 30.04.85 |
| 27 | Brooks **LENNON** | (19) 22.09.97 |
| 14 | Yura **MOVSISYAN** (Arm) | (29) 02.08.87 |
| 10 | Joao **PLATA** (Ecu) | (25) 01.03.92 |
| 22 | Ricardo **VELAZCO** | (23) 26.05.93 |
| **COACH** | | |
| Jeff **CASSAR** | | (43) 02.02.74 |

## SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 1 | David **BINGHAM** | (27) 19.10.89 |
| 28 | Andrew **TARBELL** | (23) 07.10.93 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 5 | Víctor **BERNARDEZ** (Hon) | (34) 24.05.82 |
| 18 | Kip **COLVEY** (NZ) | (23) 15.03.94 |
| 31 | Harold **CUMMINGS** (Pan) | (25) 03.01.92 |
| 20 | Shaun **FRANCIS** (Jam) | (30) 02.10.86 |
| 15 | Andres **IMPERIALE** (Arg) | (30) 08.07.86 |
| 23 | Florian **JUNGWIRTH** (Ger) | (28) 27.01.89 |
| 24 | Nick **LIMA** | (22) 17.11.94 |
| 2 | Kofi **SARKODIE** | (26) 22.03.91 |
| 4 | Marvell **WYNNE** | (30) 08.05.86 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 27 | Fatai **ALASHE** | (23) 21.10.93 |
| 7 | Cordell **CATO** (T&T) | (24) 15.07.92 |
| 17 | Darwin **CEREN** (EIS) | (27) 31.12.89 |
| 49 | Simon **DAWKINS** (Jam) | (29) 01.12.87 |
| 30 | Anibal **GODOY** (Pan) | (27) 10.02.90 |
| 10 | Jahmir **HYKA** (Alb) | (29) 08.03.88 |
| 33 | Marc **PELOSI** | (22) 17.06.94 |
| 6 | Shea **SALINAS** | (30) 24.06.86 |
| 38 | Matheus **SILVA** (Bra) | (20) 08.12.96 |
| 14 | Jackson **YUEILL** | (20) 19.03.97 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 25 | Quincy **AMARIKWA** | (29) 29.10.87 |
| 9 | Danny **HOESEN** (Hol) | (26) 15.01.91 |
| 22 | Tommy **THOMPSON** | (21) 15.08.95 |
| 21 | Marco **URENA** (CR) | (27) 05.03.90 |
| 8 | Chris **WONDOLOWSKI** | (34) 28.01.83 |
| **COACH** | | |
| Dominic **KINNEAR** | | (49) 26.07.67 |

## SEATTLE SOUNDERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 24 | Stefan **FREI** (Swi) | (30) 20.04.86 |
| 35 | Bryan **MEREDITH** | (27) 02.08.89 |
| 1 | Tyler **MILLER** | (24) 12.03.93 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 15 | Tony **ALFARO** (Mex) | (23) 15.06.93 |
| 3 | Brad **EVANS** | (31) 20.04.85 |
| 91 | Oniel **FISHER** (Jam) | (25) 22.11.91 |
| 33 | Joevin **JONES** (T&T) | (25) 03.08.91 |
| 14 | Chad **MARSHALL** | (32) 22.08.84 |
| ? | Nouhou **TOLO** (Cam) | (19) 23.06.97 |
| 29 | Roman **TORRES** (Pan) | (31) 20.03.86 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 6 | Osvaldo **ALONSO** (Cub) | (31) 11.11.85 |
| 8 | Alvaro **FERNANDEZ** (Uru) | (31) 11.10.85 |
| 11 | Aaron **KOVAR** | (23) 14.08.93 |
| 10 | Nicolas **LODEIRO** (Uru) | (28) 21.03.89 |
| 32 | Zach **MATHERS** | (22) 14.04.94 |
| 7 | Cristian **ROLDAN** | (21) 03.06.95 |
| 19 | Harry **SHIPP** | (25) 07.11.91 |
| 4 | Gustav **SVENSSON** (Swe) | (30) 07.02.87 |
| 23 | Henry **WINGO** | (21) 04.10.95 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 12 | Seyi **ADEKOYA** | (21) 05.12.95 |
| 17 | Will **BRUIN** | (27) 24.10.89 |
| 2 | Clint **DEMPSEY** | (34) 09.03.83 |
| 13 | Jordan **MORRIS** | (22) 26.10.94 |
| **COACH** | | |
| Brian **SCHMETZER** | | (54) 18.08.62 |

## SPORTING KANSAS CITY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 21 | Andrew **DYKSTRA** | (31) 02.01.86 |
| 29 | Tim **MELIA** | (30) 15.05.86 |
| 1 | Adrian **ZENDEJAS** | (21) 30.08.95 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 17 | Saad **ABDUL-SALAAM** | (25) 08.09.91 |
| 5 | Matt **BESLER** | (30) 11.02.87 |
| 4 | Kevin **ELLIS** | (25) 30.06.91 |
| 40 | Igor **JULIAO** (Bra) | (22) 23.08.94 |
| 3 | Ike **OPARA** | (27) 21.02.89 |
| 2 | Erik **PALMER-BROWN** | (19) 24.04.97 |
| 15 | Seth **SINOVIC** | (30) 28.01.87 |
| 23 | Colton **STORM** | (22) 06.07.94 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 27 | Roger **ESPINOZA** (Hon) | (30) 25.10.86 |
| 10 | Benny **FEILHABER** | (32) 19.01.85 |
| 94 | Jimmy **MEDRANDA** (Col) | (23) 07.02.94 |
| 93 | Soni **MUSTIVAR** (Hai) | (27) 12.02.90 |
| 77 | Tyler **PASHER** (Can) | (22) 27.04.94 |
| 6 | Ilie **SANCHEZ** (Spa) | (26) 21.11.90 |
| 8 | Graham **ZUSI** | (30) 18.08.86 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 9 | Latif **BLESSING** (Gha) | (20) 30.12.96 |
| 14 | Dom **DWYER** (Eng) | (26) 30.07.90 |
| 7 | Gerso **FERNANDES** (GuB) | (26) 23.02.91 |
| 24 | Cameron **IWASA** | (23) 07.07.93 |
| 39 | Cameron **PORTER** | (23) 23.05.93 |
| 11 | Diego **RUBIO** (Chl) | (23) 15.05.93 |
| 22 | Soony **SAAD** (Leb) | (24) 17.08.92 |
| 30 | Daniel **SALLOI** (Hun) | (20) 19.07.96 |
| **COACH** | | |
| Peter **VERMES** | | (50) 21.11.66 |

## TORONTO (Can)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 25 | Alex **BONO** | (22) 25.04.94 |
| 1 | Clint **IRWIN** | (27) 01.04.89 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 33 | Steven **BEITASHOUR** (Irn) | (30) 01.02.87 |
| 6 | Nick **HAGGLUND** | (26) 14.09.90 |
| 23 | Chris **MAVINGA** (DRC) | (25) 26.05.91 |
| 3 | Drew **MOOR** | (33) 15.01.84 |
| 5 | Ashtone **MORGAN** (Can) | (26) 09.02.91 |
| 2 | Justin **MORROW** | (29) 04.10.87 |
| 15 | Eriq **ZAVALETA** | (24) 02.08.92 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 4 | Michael **BRADLEY** | (29) 31.07.87 |
| 20 | Sergio **CAMARGO** (Can) | (22) 16.08.94 |
| 14 | Jay **CHAPMAN** (Can) | (23) 01.01.94 |
| 8 | Benoit **CHEYROU** (Fra) | (35) 03.05.81 |
| 31 | Armando **COOPER** (Pan) | (29) 26.11.87 |
| 18 | Marky **DELGADO** | (21) 16.05.95 |
| 44 | Raheem **EDWARDS** (Can) | (21) 17.06.95 |
| 21 | Jonathan **OSORIO** (Can) | (24) 12.06.92 |
| 7 | Víctor **VAZQUEZ** (Spa) | (30) 20.01.87 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 17 | Jozy **ALTIDORE** | (27) 06.11.89 |
| 11 | Molham **BABOULI** (Can) | (24) 02.01.93 |
| 10 | Sebastian **GIOVINCO** (Ita) | (30) 26.01.87 |
| 9 | Tsubasa **ENDOH** (Jap) | (23) 20.08.93 |
| 22 | Jordan **HAMILTON** (Can) | (21) 17.03.96 |
| 87 | Tosaint **RICKETTS** (Can) | (29) 06.08.87 |
| **COACH** | | |
| Greg **VANNEY** | | (42) 11.06.74 |

Champions...last season's MLS Cup winners, Seattle Sounders

## VANCOUVER WHITECAPS (Can)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALKEEPERS** | | |
| 1 | David **OUSTED** (Den) | (32) 01.02.85 |
| 18 | Spencer **RICHEY** | (24) 30.05.92 |
| 70 | Paolo **TORNAGHI** (ita) | (28) 21.06.88 |
| **DEFENDERS** | | |
| 17 | Marcel **DE JONG** (Can) | (30) 15.10.86 |
| 22 | Christian **DEAN** | (24) 14.03.93 |
| 6 | David **EDGAR** (Can) | (29) 19.05.87 |
| 2 | Jordan **HARVEY** | (33) 28.01.84 |
| 46 | Brett **LEVIS** (Can) | (23) 29.05.93 |
| 28 | Jake **NERWINSKI** | (22) 17.10.94 |
| 26 | Tim **PARKER** | (24) 23.02.93 |
| 14 | Cole **SEILER** | (23) 05.02.94 |
| 20 | Brek **SHEA** | (27) 28.02.90 |
| 4 | Kendall **WASTON** (CR) | (29) 01.01.88 |
| 25 | Sheanon **WILLIAMS** | (27) 17.03.90 |
| **MIDFIELDERS** | | |
| 7 | Christian **BOLANOS** (CR) | (32) 17.05.84 |
| 32 | Marco **BUSTOS** (Can) | (20) 22.04.96 |
| 67 | Alphonso **DAVIES** (Can) | (16) 02.11.00 |
| 8 | Andrew **JACOBSON** | (31) 25.09.85 |
| 15 | Matias **LABA** (Arg) | (25) 11.12.91 |
| 30 | Ben **McKENDRY** (Can) | (23) 25.03.93 |
| 11 | Nicolas **MEZQUIDA** (Uru) | (25) 21.01.92 |
| 29 | Yordy **REYNA** (Per) | (23) 16.09.93 |
| 77 | Mauro **ROSALES** (Arg) | (36) 24.02.81 |
| 13 | Cristian **TECHERA** (Uru) | (24) 31.05.92 |
| 31 | Russell **TEIBERT** (Can) | (24) 22.12.92 |
| **FORWARDS** | | |
| 47 | Kyle **GREIG** | (27) 22.02.90 |
| 19 | Erik **HURTADO** | (26) 11.05.90 |
| 23 | Kekuta **MANNEH** (Gam) | (22) 30.12.94 |
| 12 | Fredy **MONTERO** (Col) | (29) 26.07.87 |
| **COACH** | | |
| Carl **ROBINSON** (Wal) | | (40) 13.10.76 |

World Soccer's GREAT MATCHES

JULY 3, 1994, PASADENA: WORLD CUP ROUND OF 16

# Romania 3 Argentina 2

With their inspirational skipper banned, Argentina found Romanian captain Hagi and his team-mate Dumitrescu in inspired form

Outnumbered...Gabriel Batistuta struggles to break down a packed defence

With Diego Maradona expelled from the competition after failing a drugs test, Argentina found Romania's counter-attacking style too hot to handle as the USA World Cup entered the knockout stage.

"The tactical contrast was intriguing," explained *World Soccer*'s report from Pasadena's Rose Bowl stadium. "Romania play with a net of six men strung across midfield. They trap opposing teams just as a spider traps a fly."

With Claudio Caniggia also absent through injury, Argentina adopted a 4-3-1-2 formation, with Ariel Ortega in the playmaker role vacated by Maradona, but they often found themselves outnumbered in both midfield and attack.

Argentina dominated possession early on, but Romania proved a threat every time they crossed the half-way line and they scored twice in the opening 18 minutes through Ilie Dumitrescu. Gabriel Batistuta briefly levelled from the penalty spot, but it took a goal-line clearance by Fernando Caceres to deny the impressive Dumitrescu a first-half hat-trick.

Despite Argentina's two full-backs pushing further forward after the interval, and Gabriel Batistuta and Abel Balbo continually switching flanks up front,

Challenge...Diego Simeone holds off Miodrag Belodedici

Romania were able to keep the South Americans at bay and added a third goal when Dumitrescu stole possession after a slip by Jose Basualdo and played in Hagi.

Balbo reduced the arrears with 15 minutes left to play, but Romania hung on for what coach Anghel Iordanescu would describe afterwards as: "The greatest event celebrated by our people since the [1989] Revolution. It's also the greatest moment in our soccer history."

With Romania going out on penalties to Sweden in the next round, you sense he was probably right on both accounts. WS

Referee: Pairetto (Ita)

## KEY MOMENTS

Free-kick...goalkeeper Luis Islas is beaten

**11min** A free-kick from the left by Ilie Dumitrescu sails over the head of Argentina goalkeeper Luis Islas and into the far corner. **1-0**

**16min** Gabriel Batistuta is brought down by Daniel Prodan and converts the spot-kick himself. **1-1**

**18min** A swift counter-attack sees Romania's Gheorghe Hagi thread a pass into the path of Dumitrescu who neatly finishes. **2-1**

Assist...Gheorghe Hagi

**19min** Dumitrescu beats Jose Chamot and cuts the ball back to Gheorghe Popescu, whose shot is saved by Islas.

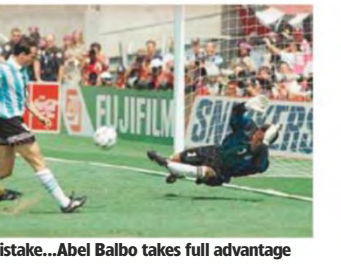
**27min** A cross by Argentina's Ariel Ortega finds Abel Balbo, whose diving header is just wide.

**45min** Dorinel Munteanu takes out two defenders with a through ball to Dumitrescu, whose goal-bound shot is cleared by Fernando Caceres.

**58min** A mistake by Jose Basualdo allows Dumitrescu to beat two defenders and set up Hagi. **3-1**

**75min** A long-range shot by Caceres is dropped by Romania goalkeeper Florin Prunea and Balbo is on hand to turn the ball home. **3-2**

**83min** Dumitrescu back-heels the ball into the path of Hagi, who loops it back to him over two defenders but the cross is intercepted by Caceres before Popescu can finish.




Mistake...Abel Balbo takes full advantage

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